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No. 711.

{ COMPLETE. }

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE STREET, N. Y.
NEW YORK, March 3, 1886.

ISSUED EVERY WEDNESDAY.

{ PRICE
5 CENTS }

Vol. I



THE HAUNTED PIONEER

OR,

FIGHTING FOR TEXAS.

By "NONAME."

Author of "Trusty Joe, the Brave Old Scout," "Old One-Eye, the Trapper Guide of the Northwest," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

OFF FOR TEXAS.—A STRANGE COUNTRY.

I CAME, or rather went, in company with a friend, and indorsed, as it were, by a company of our enlightened New Yorkers, who had just then directed their speculative minds toward Texas; in other words I had the good or bad luck to possess a so-called Texas land-scrip; that is, a certificate granted by the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, wherein it was announced to all whom it might concern, that Edward Morse (that is my worthy self) had deposited in the hands of the aforesaid company the sum of one thousand dollars; for which deposit the aforesaid Edward Morse was entitled to choose for himself, a tract of land of ten thousand acres, neither more nor less, within the territory of the aforesaid Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, to take possession of them and settle there; in short, to exercise, or cause to be exercised, every privilege of a proprietor, with this single condition, that in the choice of his ten thousand acres he should not infringe on any previous right or title.

Ten thousand acres in the most beautiful country of the earth, and beneath a sky in comparison with which our Maryland is dull and murky, was really too tempting a bait not to be swallowed at a period when credulity was very fashionable, indeed, quite an epidemic. As might be expected, I swallowed the bait; and I consequently embarked with a portion of my wardrobe, and a friend, who, possessed, on paper, a like number of acres with myself, for this much-vaunted land, intending, at any rate, to choose my share and take possession of it; if the land did not please me, to turn it into money.

We went on board the fast-sailing schooner, "The Catcher," and after a three-weeks' voyage arrived safely in Galveston Bay.

The shores of Galveston Bay, in which the Rio de Brazos empties itself, are not so appalling as those of Louisiana and the mouths of the Mississippi, but from this simple reason, that they are not visible.

You can see neither mouth nor land.

An island extends itself for sixty miles, in the shape of a huge lizard; it is called Galveston Island, but has neither hill nor valley, neither house nor farm, not even a tree, with the exception of three stunted trees at the western end, but which, through the extreme flatness of the ground, are visible from a great distance.

In fact, the mouth of the river would be difficult to find, if it were not for these three dwarf trees.

The most experienced sailors meet with no small difficulty here, for as the land is only like a line stretching out into the sea, it disappears behind the lightest wave; and the waving grass resembles the waves of the

equally green coast-water; so that it really requires a sharp eye to discern the one from the other; and we, as before said, had only the three dwarf trees to thank for finding our way to the mouth of the river.

We kept in the direction of these trees for about ten miles along the island, until a pilot came out to meet us, who then undertook the management of the schooner. But we did not get over the sand-banks so easily; we struck several times; twice we stuck fast, but with the united help of our thirty, or rather, sixty hands, we arrived safely at the mouth of the river.

I with my friend and two fellow-passengers, after having assisted in towing the schooner over the last dangerous sand-bank, went forward in a boat, and were already near the land, when the boat capsized, and buried us all in the waves. Fortunately, the water was no longer deep, or else we should have paid dearly for our impatience; as it was, we got off with a thorough drenching.

Having crawled to the land, we had already stood a considerable time, but to all of us it seemed as if we were still on the sea; the land was so very unlike land.

In our whole lives we had never seen such a coast.

In fact, it would have been impossible for us to distinguish the boundary of the earth and water, only that the foam of the waves which was deposited on the grass, served as a line of demarkation.

Just imagine an infinite plain, extending for more than a hundred miles before you, overgrown with the finest and most delicate grass, without even the slightest elevation or declivity, fanned by every breeze of the sea, rolling in uninterrupted waves, neither tree nor hill, neither house nor farm, and you will have a faint idea of the wonderful appearance of this country.

It is true that about ten or twelve miles toward the north and north-west, a few dark masses were to be seen, which, as we found out afterward, were clusters of trees, but which we took for islands, as in truth they are called, and characteristically enough, for they resemble them exactly.

A blockhouse, standing on a small tongue of land in the rear, from which the flag of the Mexican Republic proudly waved, convinced us that we were on terra firma.

This blockhouse, at that time the only building which graced or disgraced the haven of Galveston, had, as you will easily imagine, many uses.

It was head custom-house; seat of the director of the revenues; of the civil and military intendant; barracks of the Mexican troops stationed there; headquarters of their commanding officer; and, finally, hotel and wine and spirit store.

Near a caricature which was meant to represent the Mexican eagle, hung a rum bottle, and the flag of the republic waved protectingly over the announcement,

"Brandy, whisky, and accommodation for man and beast." Before the blockhouse bivouacked the assembled garrison, which consisted of a company of twelve dwarfish, spindled-legged fellows, all of whom I could have put to flight with my riding-whip—not one taller than our American boys of twelve or fourteen, and not nearly so strong, but all with tremendous whiskers, beards, and mustache, and a habit of knitting their brows, as if in the endeavor to look formidable. They were all huddling around an old board, on which they were playing cards so earnestly that they could scarcely spare time to look at us. Their commander, however, came out of the house in a friendly manner to meet us.

It is a strange feeling, I assure you, after a three-weeks' voyage, to run into a harbor which is no harbor, and a land which seemed to us every instant as if it must roll away from under our feet. Our fellow passengers, of whom several had now joined us, looked just as startled and bewildered as we were, and hurried to the blockhouse in a manner which evidently showed that they were actuated by the same uneasy feeling. When we looked around us from the blockhouse, the immense, the infinite expanse of meadow and water resembled an ocean out of which the building arose as a rock or island; we really all felt much relieved when we found ourselves once more on board our schooner.

It took us three entire days to make the thirty miles from the mouth of the Brazos to Brazoria. On the first day we passed through an endless meadow, on the second we drew nearer the island. The meadow then became a park; the most magnificent clusters of trees appeared on our right and on our left, for a distance of many miles; but in this glorious park there was no trace of human beings, it was a boundless ocean of grass, with islands of trees. But such an ocean strikes a stranger more than the ocean of waters. Everything was so calm, so solemn, so majestic; forest and plain, meadows and pastures, so pure, so fresh, as though just come forth from the hand of the Almighty Creator; no trace of sinful humanity, nothing but the pure, spotless world of God.

Fifteen miles above the mouth of the Rio del Brazos we entered the first forest; sycamores and pecans arched from either side over the river, and to heighten the enjoyment, there appeared a herd of deer, and numerous flock of turkeys; both, however, were very timid, and ran away directly they perceived us. The soil of the country was nevertheless, as you will easily comprehend, the chief object of our scrutiny. On the coast we had found it sandy, with a very thin crust of good soil, but without any sign of bog or mire.

Further up the embankment became thicker, and lay from one to four, eight, twelve, even fifteen and twenty feet deep,

on a base of sand and clay. As yet we had seen nothing in the shape of hill or rock; indeed, it was a difficult matter to discover, for a hundred miles, a stone as large as a pigeon's egg. Nevertheless, there was no lack of wood to build houses and form fences, and this comforted us again. Our hopes increased with every mile.

When we arrived at Brazoria, however, we received a cruel shock. Brazoria, about thirty miles beyond where the Rio Brazos flows into the bay, was, at the period of our arrival there—that is, in the year 1832—an important town, at least for Texas, as it contained more than thirty houses, of which three were brick, and the rest, for the most part, of wood, all American to the life; the streets also, after our most approved fashion, were perfectly straight, and crossed each other at right angles; but there was this single inconvenience, that it was under water at spring and flood tide. This inconvenience, however, was but little cared for by the good Brazorians, on account of the inexhaustible fertility of the soil.

Although it was early in the month of March, we found already young potatoes, or rather yams, also French beans, peas, and the most delicious artichokes that ever delighted the palate of an epicure. But we found something that was far less agreeable to my friend and myself, and this was the discovery that our scrip was not quite the anchor with which we had hoped to secure our life's ark in the harbor of Texas. We heard doubts respecting it, which, after the arrival of William Austin, son of Colonel Austin, became fatal certainty. He gave us the acts of the Mexican Congress to read, which only too plainly convinced us that our scrip was of no more value than any other waste paper.

So we had nothing better to do than to buy mustangs, of which we could purchase the finest for a song; and look about us in the country.

This was indeed the most prudent thing we could do; so before everything else we bought mustangs.

CHAPTER II.

CATCHING CATTLE—THE MUSTANG.

ACCOMPANIED by my friend, I undertook many excursions to Anahuac, a market-town of from three, six, or ten, to twenty houses. We also visited plantations: at first those to which we were recommended, afterward to any one which came in our way. We arrived one day at one of these plantations. It lay a mile aside from the road which leads from Harrisburg to San Felipe de Austin, and belonged to a Mr. Neal.

A pleasing trait of this favored land is the quiet, unostentatious hospitality of its inhabitants. Even where we brought no recommendation—and I mean not merely written, but even verbal recommendation—we entered, quite at ease, into the houses, and were received just as freely, indeed, quite as old acquaintances.

Our host, Mr. Neal, was a joyous Kentuckian, and in this respect did honor to his native State. Our reception was the heartiest possible, and we had nothing to return for it but the news which we brought from home.

You can with difficulty form an idea of the curiosity, the anxiety, with which our country people abroad listen to news of home.

We had arrived in the afternoon; and the morning of the following day found the whole family round us still listening to our narrations.

We had hardly slept when we were again awakened by our worthy host. From twenty to thirty cattle were to be caught, and sent to the market at New Orleans. The kind of sport which takes place at these times is always interesting, and seldom dangerous. As you may well imagine, we did not allow

this friendly invitation to be repeated, but sprung up, dressed ourselves, breakfasted in haste, and then mounted our mustangs.

We had from four to five miles to ride before we came to the animals that, in herds of from thirty to forty heads, partly grazed, partly moved about in the prairie. They were the most beautiful cattle I had ever seen, being all high-legged, and much taller, slimmer, and better formed than ours.

The horns were also longer, and in the distance resembled more the antlers of deer than cows' horns.

Although left to themselves summer and winter in the prairie, they do not degenerate, and only become wild or dangerous when they perceive wolves or bears; but then the whole herd rushes with frantic leaps to the ambush, where the beast of prey couches, and it is well to get out of the way.

We numbered half a dozen riders, viz., Mr. Neal, my friend, myself, and three negroes. Our task consisted in driving the animals home, when those intended for the market were to be caught with the lasso, and immediately sent to Brazoria.

I rode my mustang; we were within a quarter of a mile of the first lot, which numbered from fifty to sixty cattle. The animals remained quite quiet. Riding round them, we sought to catch the second lot. These also remained quite quiet, and so we rode on and on, and began to spread out so as to inclose the collected herds in a half circle, and drive them home.

My mustang had hitherto behaved very well, capering along, and showing none of his tricks; but now that we were scarcely two hundred steps from the cattle, the devil which possessed him began to wake up.

About one thousand steps from us grazed the mustangs of the plantation; and scarcely did he see them than he broke out into capers, which brought me, although no inexperienced rider, almost out of the saddle. Nevertheless, I still held on.

But unluckily, contrary to the advice of Mr. Neal, I had not only substituted my American bit for the Mexican one, but I had also left behind the lasso, which, until now, had more assisted me in governing the animal than even the bit, and without which it is impossible to do anything with a mustang in a prairie.

All my horsemanship was here unavailing.

Like a wild boar, the mustang sprang about five hundred steps toward the herd, but stopped suddenly before he got among them; and, placing his head between his fore feet, threw his hind feet so unexpectedly in the air, that I flew over his head before I had dreamed of the possibility of such a thing.

To jump immediately with both fore feet on the reins and snaffle, to tear off the bridle, and then, neighing wildly, to spring among the herd, was to this devil's imp but the work of an instant.

Enraged, I raised myself among the high grass. My nearest neighbor, one of the negroes, sprang to my assistance, and besought me to let the animal go, as Antony, the keeper, would soon catch it again; but, in my rage, I did not listen to him. Furiously I commanded him to dismount, and to give me his horse.

In vain the black besought me, for Heaven's sake, not to ride after the animal, but rather to let him run to the devil. I would not listen; but, springing on to the back of his mustang, I shot after the fugitive. Mr. Neal had, meanwhile, approached, and cried, as loudly as he was able, to me to stay—for Heaven's sake to stay! that I knew not what I undertook in riding after a runaway mustang in a prairie; for that a Texan prairie was no Virginia or Carolina meadow.

I listened to nothing; the trick which the beast had played me had robbed me of all my senses, and I galloped after him like one beside himself.

The animal had galloped toward the herd of mustangs, and suffered me to approach him within about three hundred steps, and to put the lasso (which, luckily, was fastened

to the saddle) to rights, when he broke away again. I again started after him. Again he stopped for an instant, and then again he galloped away. I still foolishly followed him.

At the distance of about half a mile he stopped again, and I got within two or three hundred steps when again he broke away, with a shrill, malicious neigh. I rode more slowly: the mustang also relaxed his pace. I rode faster: he also went faster.

As many as ten times he suffered me to approach within two hundred steps, and he then galloped away again.

It was now certainly high time to desist from this mad chase, and leave it to more experienced hands; but any one who has been in such a dilemma must know that prudence on such occasions generally takes its flight.

I rode like a madman after the animal. He let me get nearer to him, and then, with his malicious neigh, he again broke away.

It was this neigh which, in reality, so imbibited me; it made me blind and mad; it was so spiteful, and sounded in my ears so exactly like defiance, that I became more and more furious.

At last, I began to think the chase too foolish. I would venture a last trial, and would then certainly desist. He stopped before one of the tree islands. I thought I would ride round it, creep through the trees, and from thence would throw the lasso over the mustang's head as he was grazing near to the edge, or at least drive him toward the plantation.

I thought I had laid my plans very cleverly, and accordingly rode round, and then through the island, and came to the point where I made sure of the mustang; but, although I had approached the edge as carefully as if I rode on eggs, no trace of my mustang was to be seen. I then rode quite out of the island—he had disappeared; I cursed him heartily—gave spurs to my animal, and returned (or thought I did so) toward the plantation.

CHAPTER III.

CHASING A RUNAWAY.

It was true I could no longer see the plantation—even the herds of mustangs and cattle had disappeared; but that did not make me uneasy, for I thought I knew the direction, and had seen the island from the house. I found, also, on every side, so many traces of horses' feet, that the possibility of having lost myself never occurred to me.

I therefore rode on unconcernedly. I had ridden thus perhaps an hour. By degrees the time began to appear long. My watch pointed to one. We had left home at nine. I had therefore been four hours in the saddle, and allowing an hour and a half to the encircling of the cattle, it appeared that I had been engaged two hours and a half on my own rash sport.

I must then have got further from the plantation than I thought. My appetite began to get sharp. It was about the end of March, the day serene and fresh as one of our May days.

The sun was now refulgent in the heavens, but the morning had been dull and foggy; and as, unfortunately, we had arrived at the plantation about the middle of the day before, and had immediately sat down to table, and talked away the whole evening and night, I had had no opportunity of noticing the situation of the house.

This reflection began in some degree to make me anxious, and now, also, the earnest entreaty of the negro, and Mr. Neal's recall, occurred to me; but I still comforted myself, thinking it certain, at any rate, that I was no more than ten or fifteen miles from the plantation, and that I should every minute come upon the herds, and then all would be right.

This comfortable thought, however, did not last long, for I had now ridden another

hour, and still there was no sign of any herd or of the plantation.

I became impatient, and even angry, with poor Mr. Neal: why did he not send two of his lazy negroes, or his herdsman after me? But then I remembered to have heard that the herdsman was gone to Anchuac, and would not be back for a couple of days.

Still the Kentuckian might fire a shot or two by way of signal. I stopped, I listened, but I heard no sound; even the birds in the tree islands were silent. All nature held siesta; for me a very oppressive siesta.

As far as the eye reached was an undulating sea of grass, with tree islands here and there, but no sign of human beings. At last I thought I discovered something. The nearest of the tree islands was certainly the same I had so much admired in coming out of the house. Its shape was that of a serpent which coils itself to spring upon its prey.

I had seen it about six or seven miles to the right of the plantation. I could not be wrong if I now took the direction to the left. I started afresh, and trotted an hour—a second hour—in the direction in which the house ought to be.

Many hours did I ride thus, sometimes stopping and listening to catch some sound. But no; no shot—no call—nothing was to be heard.

I now made a discovery anything but pleasing. In the direction in which we had ridden out, the grass was very abundant, and the flowers scarce; but the prairie through which I was now riding resembled a flower-garden—a flower-garden in which there was scarcely anything green; but the most variegated carpet of flowers—red, yellow, blue, and violet—which I had ever seen. There were millions of the most beautiful prairie roses, tuberose, dahlias, and China-asters.

No botanical garden on earth was ever so beautiful or so luxuriant.

I had again ridden by a tree island, when, in the distance of about two miles an object appeared—an object so extraordinary as by far to exceed all the remarkable appearances I had ever seen, either here or in the States.

Before me stood a colossal solid mass; a hill, or rather a mountain, of the purest and most dazzling silver. The sun had just disappeared behind a cloud, and now, as its slanting rays lighted up this extraordinary phenomenon, I stood staring at it in speechless astonishment; but if all the treasures of the earth had been offered me, I could not have explained it. Now it appeared like a hill of silver, now like a palace with gates and pinnacles, now again like a magic colossus, but always of solid silver, and magnificent beyond description.

What could it be? I had never seen anything that resembled it.

The sight perplexed me; it appeared to me as if here I were not secure, as if I were on enchanted ground, where some goblin was making me his sport; for that I had now really lost myself, and had strayed into unknown regions, I could no longer doubt.

A flood of dark, troubled thoughts immediately followed this dreadful certainty.

All that I had ever heard of persons lost in the wilderness rose in the most horrible images before me; not mere fairy tales, not mere backwoodsmen's legends, but facts related to me by credible persons, many of whom had most earnestly warned me, before I came to Texas, never on any account to ramble in the prairie without a guide or compass.

Even planters who were at home here never did so; for hill-less and mountainless as the land is, a wanderer has not the slightest clew, and might rove about in this ocean of grass and labyrinth of islands for days, and even weeks, without a prospect of finding his way out.

It is true, that in the summer and autumn such wandering is less dangerous, because then the islands offer an abundance of the most delicious fruits, which at any rate may

preserve from famishing. The most delicious grapes, plums, peaches, are then everywhere to be found; but now it was quite early in the spring.

Everywhere I found vines, and peach and plum trees, whose fruit I pictured as the most exquisite, as indeed I found it to be at a later period; but now they had scarcely blossomed. I also saw game hurry to and fro; but, being without a gun, I stood in the midst of the most fertile land on the earth, possibly, and even probably, about to suffer death from hunger.

The dreadful idea did not come in the order that I now relate it; it shot through my brain confusedly and heavily, and yet like lightning; and each time it flashed across me I felt a pang—a sense of cramp and pain.

Then again more comforting thoughts came. I had already been four weeks in the country. The greater part of this time I had roamed in every direction, and those roamings had been all through prairies, for the whole land was a prairie; but then I had always my compass, and had been in company.

This had made me so confident, that, stupidly deaf to all warning and exhortation, I had rashly followed the wild animal, not thinking that four weeks scarcely sufficed to reconnoiter a circle of twenty miles, much less to make me familiar with a country three times as large as the State of New York.

Nevertheless, I still comforted myself; for of the real magnitude of my danger I had as yet no clear idea.

A sanguine temperament supported me. I considered it as impossible that in so short a time I could have lost myself so completely, that Mr. Neal or his negroes could not find my track.

Even the sun which was now setting in the north-west, behind the mist-veiled island, suffering the twilight to come on, comforted me wonderfully—a singular ground for comfort! Home-bred, and accustomed from childhood to a regular life, it had become so much a habit with me to be at home at night, or at least under shelter, that it appeared to me impossible that I should pass the night otherwise. So fixed did the idea become that this shelter must be near, that I spurred my horse involuntarily, being almost convinced that I could see Mr. Neal's house, and the lights moving about it, in the distance.

Every moment I thought I should hear the barking of the dogs, the lowing of the cattle, and the laughter of the children. In fact, my fancy made me distinctly see the house before me, and the lights shining in the parlor. I hastened on, but as, at last, I came near to what should have been the house, it became again an island.

What I had taken for candles were fire-flies, which now swarmed from the tree islands, and spread themselves over the prairie, lighting it up so well with their small blue flames, that I could have imagined myself moving amongst a sea of Bengal fire.

Anything more bewildering to the mind can scarcely be imagined than such a ride, on a warm March night, through the interminable solitary prairie; overhead the deep blue firmament, with its bright sparkling stars; at my feet, and all around me, an ocean of magical lights from myriads of little fire-flies in the grass or floating in the air.

It was to me a new, an enchanted world! I could distinguish every grass, every flower, every leaf; but, at the same time, every grass, every flower, every leaf, appeared in an artificial light.

Roses, dahlias, asters, geraniums, vines, began to rise, to move, to arrange themselves in ranks. The whole vegetable world began to dance around me.

Suddenly a loud and prolonged note sounded across the sea of fire.

I stopped, listened, and looked perplexedly around me. Nothing more was to be heard.

Again I rode on. Once more I heard

the long-drawn note; but this time it sounded mournfully. I stopped again. Again I rode on. A third time the sound was heard. It came from one of the tree islands. It was a whip-poor-will singing her night song. As, for the fourth time, she poured out her lamentation in the gleaming night, she was answered by a good-natured katy-did. Oh! how I rejoiced to hear the note of this nocturnal songster of my own dear home. In an instant, my dear paternal home rose before me. So overpowering was this illusion, to which I did not give myself up, but which carried me away, that I gave spurs to my mustang, firmly convinced my father's house lay before me.

A sweet dream! A painful awakening! It is impossible to describe the feelings which possessed me. Everything hung heavily, appallingly upon me. My brain seemed whirling in my head; my head to be turning on my body.

I was not so weary and tired, so hungry and thirsty, as to feel my strength decline; but the anxiety, the fear, the wonderful phenomena, produced a giddiness which impelled me about like a sleep-walker. Absolutely incapable of thinking any longer, I stood bewildered—staring—I know not how long, in the blue-flaming world. At last I did mechanically, what during my four weeks' residence in the country I had seen others do, namely, I dug with my pocket-knife, which, luckily, I had with me, a hole in the meadow ground, laid the knotted end of the lasso in it, closed the hole over again, and after throwing the noose over the head of the animal, and taking off the saddle and bridle, I let it graze, laying myself down outside the circle which it could traverse.

An odd mode, you will say, of tying up the horse; but, nevertheless, the most natural and easy in a land where, often for fifty miles, no house, and for half that distance neither bush nor tree is to be seen.

Nevertheless, I could not sleep; for from many sides I could now hear a howling, which I soon recognized as that of wolves and jaguars; certainly not a pleasant music anywhere; but here—in this fire-ocean, this strange, enchanted world—this howling sounded so horrible, that it pierced through my marrow and bones until I feared I should go mad. My nerves were in an uproar; and, indeed, I do not know what would have become of me if, happily, I had not remembered that my cigars and a little roll of Virginia tobacco remained in my pocket. Priceless treasures! for at this moment they did not fail to soothe my agitated thoughts. A couple of Havannas (being a confirmed smoker, I had naturally some fuses with me) brought a kindly stupefaction over me, in which I fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

LOST IN THE PRAIRIE.

THE day had already dawned when I awoke. With my dreams had also disappeared my troubled thoughts. I felt very hungry; but, nevertheless, fresh and cheerful. Fasting as I was, I determined to consider the direction I should take. I first adjusted the saddle and bridle, dug the knot out of the hole, put the lasso in order, and then mounted my mustang.

A provoking sprite had been playing his tricks with me for a whole day—had made me repent my indiscretion; and therefore I hoped he would now deal more mercifully with me, and not let his sport become too serious.

In this hope I resumed my ride.

The morning passed, noon came on, the sun stood high in the cloudless sky, my appetite began to feel stronger. It soon became canine, and gnawed me sharply. By degrees I felt as if a crab was in my body. I could trace the feelers, the claws, as they moved about, and seized the tenderest parts of my entrails. My powers, which on awak-

ing in the morning had been so fresh and lively, I now felt visibly decrease.

A certain squeamishness, a faint, sickly sensation came over me. But if hunger gnawed me painfully, so did thirst torture me. This thirst was really a racking, hellish torture; but, like the hunger, it never lasted long. My weariness also passed away again, and after every fit there came a pause, during which I felt tolerably well.

The thirty or more hours, in which I had tasted nothing, had rather strained than relaxed my naturally strong nerves; but still I began to see clearly that this repeated straining could not last much longer without exhaustion. Already the preliminary symptoms had announced it. The confidence and presence of mind which had upheld me until now, began to recede, and to be substituted by a feeling of despondency, during which such confused images floated around me, that my head became dizzy, and I hung from my mustang as one intoxicated.

I cannot tell how long I was carried thus, nor how, when night came, I got from the back of the animal; probably I owed it to the lasso that he moved about so patiently with me; and how I passed the night, Heaven alone knows. I was incapable of further thought. If I attempted to think, a pang shot across my brain. Everything pained me—limbs, organs, my whole body. I felt as if broken on the wheel. My hands were grown thin, my cheeks hollow, my eyes sunk deep in their sockets. When I felt my face, I became aware of the change that had taken place, and an idiotic, half-maniacal laugh escaped me. I was becoming delirious. In the morning I was scarcely able to stand, so much had the four days' ride, exertion, anxiety, and despair reduced me. It is said that a healthy man can hold out for nine days without sustenance; perhaps so, in a room or a prison, but certainly not in a Texan prairie. I am convinced that I could not have survived the fifth day.

How I got on the back of the mustang is to this day an enigma; probably he laid himself down, tired, and got up with me as I seated myself on the saddle. As I rode along, everything moved about so confusedly before my eyes, that there were moments when I imagined myself no longer on earth.

I still, however, faintly remember that something suddenly struck my head, whether blows, or sounds, I cannot say. I thought I heard something like groaning. A rattling in the throat, perhaps my own, perhaps that of a stranger, fell on my ears. Sense and consciousness had now almost forsaken me. Only very dimly did it appear to me as though I brushed by leaves and boughs; then a sound rushed on my ears, like the cracking or breaking of branches, and I clung, with my last strength, to something, but what it was, whether saddle or mane, or what besides, I have no idea.

This hold escaped me, my strength failed—I fell. A report like the thunder of a cannon, a roaring or rushing as of the cataract of Niagara, a whirling as if I were being drawn to the center of the earth, a host of the most frightful phantoms, which crowded upon and encircled me on all sides, overpowered me; and then music, as from the higher spheres; glittering figures of light—Elysium opened to my view! Again a painful stitch ran through my throat and bowels, which seemed to me as if bursting into burning flames. Then I felt as if the departing spark of life were again returning—the lungs opened themselves, and it seemed as if something hot were passing through my veins and pressing into my head. My eyes opened.

CHAPTER V.

FOUND AT LAST.

I FIRST looked up, and then about me. I lay on the bank of a small but deep river. My mustang grazed at a little distance, and beside me stood a man, with his arms

crossed, who held in his hand a wicker-covered huntsman's flask. I could not observe more, for I was too weak to raise myself up. My bowels still burned; but my clothes, which were wet, clung about my body, and afforded me real refreshment.

"Where am I?" I gasped.

"Where are you, stranger? where are you? By the Jacinto; and that you are by the Jacinto, and not in it, is no fault of yours, I reckon; d—d if it is!"

There was something so inexpressibly harsh and repulsive in the tone and manner in which the man spoke, and in his grating, scornful laugh, that every word he uttered jarred upon my ear. If half the world had been offered me for a friendly look, I could not have given it to him, with such aversion did his contemptuous laugh fill me.

I knew he had been the preserver of my life—that he had drawn me out of the river, into which I had fallen headlong, over the neck of my mustang, when the animal, raging with thirst, had sprung over the bank into the water—that without him I must inevitably have been drowned, even had the river not been so deep as it was; and that it was also he who had restored me, with his whisky, from that deadly swoon to consciousness; but if he had saved my life ten times over, I could not have conquered my inexplicable dislike for him. I could not even look at him.

"It don't seem as if my company's agreeable," he said, at last.

"Your company not agreeable? I have not seen a mortal soul, nor had bit nor drop in my mouth, for four days."

"Holla! that's a lie!" he shouted, with another strange laugh; "you've taken a mouthful out of my flask—p'raps not taken it, exactly, but you've had it down your throat. Where do you come from? That beast's not yours?"

"No; Mr. Neal's," I replied.

"Whose is it?" he asked again, furtively.

"Mr. Neal's."

"See it is, by the brand. But how came you from Mr. Neal's to Jacinto? It's a good seventy miles across the prairie to Mr. Neal's plantation. Haven't stole his mustang, eh?"

"Lost my way—four days—nothing in my mouth."

I was unable to say more; weakness and repugnance sealed my mouth.

"Four days without eatin', and in a Texan prairie, with islands on all sides?" said the man laughing. "Ah! see how it is—a gentleman! see it plain! Was also a sort of one myself, once. Thought, I suppose, our Texas prairies were like your prairies in the States. Ha! ha!"

The man still spoke with his head thrown backward, as if he avoided my look.

"I am weak, and tired to death; I wish to go to a house to shelter; anywhere to men."

"To men?" said the man, with a sarcastic laugh—"to men?" he repeated, stepping aside a few paces.

I was scarcely able to turn my head, but the movement alarmed me and I compelled myself. He had drawn a long knife from his belt, which he was grinning at. I was able now to take a full view of him. A more frightful countenance never came before me. His features were the wildest I had ever seen. His bloodshot eyes rolled like balls of fire in their sockets. His manner betrayed a raging inward struggle. He could not stand still three seconds together, but paced forward and backward, his fingers playing all the while with the edge of the knife. I felt that a conflict was going on within him which would decide upon my life or death. I was, nevertheless, perfectly calm. In my situation death had no terrors. The images of home, of my mother, my sisters and brothers, my father, passed before my eyes. Involuntarily I turned them upward and prayed.

The man had walked still further from me. I turned myself as much as I could, and looked after him. As my eyes followed him, I saw before me the same grand phenome-

non which I had seen the first day of my wanderings. The colossal silver mass stood not two hundred steps distant from me. He disappeared behind it.

After a while he came forward again, slowly, and with hesitation. As he now approached, I saw, by degrees, his whole figure. He was tall and meager, but well and strongly built. His face (so much of it, at least, as a beard which had not been shaver for a week, would permit me to see) was sun and weather-burnt, like that of an Indian but his head bespoke his white blood. Nevertheless, his eyes were frightful, and became the more so the longer I looked at them.

The furies of hell seemed raging in those eyes. His hair hung roughly about his forehead, temples and neck. His interior and exterior seemed alike desperate. On his head he wore a half-torn pocket-handkerchief, with brownish black spots. His buckskin waistcoat, his breeches, and moccasins had the same marks. Doubtless, they were blood spots. His hunting-knife, which was two feet long, with a rude wooden handle, he had replaced in his girdle, but in its stead he now grasped a Kentucky rifle.

My features must have betrayed repugnance, although I tried hard not to show it. After a furtive glance at me, he growled:

"It does not seem as if you'd much pleasure in my company? Do I look so very desperate, then? Is it written so plainly on my face?"

"What should there be written on your face?"

"What? what? Questions are for fools and children."

"I will ask nothing; but as a Christian, a countryman, I beseech you—"

"Christian!" he interrupted me, derisively, "countryman!" Then, striking the rifle violently on the ground, he cried, "There is my Christ!" He then raised it, and proved the lock. "Look! this frees from all sorrow; this is a true friend. Pooh! perhaps it'll release you too—put you to rest."

The last words he spoke aside, and as to himself.

"Make him quiet, like the others! Pooh, one more or less. Perhaps it'll drive away that cursed specter!"

All this seemed muttered to his rifle.

"You won't play false, at any rate," he continued, "or one pull."

As he spoke, he raised the weapon, and pointed the muzzle full against my breast. I did not tremble—I felt no fear. At the threshold of death he loses his terrors, and I was so reduced, I was already at the threshold. It was unnecessary to shoot me, a light stroke with the butt-end would at once have put out the spark of life. I looked calmly, and even indifferently, into the muzzle.

"If you think you can answer for it to God—to your and my Creator and Judge—do as you will!"

My fainting voice must have worked a deep impression on him, for he trembled, put down the gun, and stared at me with open mouth, and then said:

"Well! come, take a drop of whisky; it'll strengthen you. But wait, I'll mix a little water." And so saying, he went to the edge of the river, scooped up some water a few times with the hollow of his hand, poured it in the neck of the bottle, and, putting it to my lips, poured the draught down. Even the blood-thirsty Indian becomes less a savage when he practices humanity. He seemed at once a different man. His voice was not so harsh, and his manner became gentler.

"So you wish shelter?"

"Yes, for God's sake! For four days I have had nothing in my lips but a bit of tobacco."

"Can you spare a bit?"

"All I have." I pulled out of my pocket the cigar-case and the *Dulcissimus* tobacco. He snatched the latter out of my hand, and bit it in two with the voracity of a wolf.

"Ah! the right sort, this; just the right sort!" he muttered to himself, "eh, young

man, or old man. Arn't you an old man? How old are you?"

"Two-and-twenty."

He looked doubtfully at me.

"Can't hardly believe that—but four days in the prairie without eating; well—it may be! But, stranger, if I'd had this five days ago—a bite of tobacco! only a bite of tobacco! If he had only had a bite of tobacco! A bite of tobacco is worth much sometimes. None lies so heavy on my heart as him—oh! if he had only had a bite of tobacco—only one!"

His voice, while he thus spoke, groaned mournfully, and had at the same time a wild, unnatural echo.

"I tell ye, stranger," he again broke out, menacingly, "I tell ye—ah! do you see the live oak, there? Do you see it? It's the patriarch, and I tell ye you won't find a bigger or an older one in the prairies. D'ye see it?"

Suddenly he screamed wildly.

"What does it signify to you about the patriarch, and what's under it? It's nothing at all to you. Don't be too curious, I advise you! Don't venture to set a foot under it." A curse escaped him too dreadful to be repeated by a Christian tongue. "There's a specter under it!" he cried; "a specter that might frighten you; better go far away."

"I do not wish to go there; I never thought of doing so. I would rather go far away! All that I desire is the nearest road to the nearest house, no matter whether it be a plantation or inn."

"Ah! that's true, man—to the next inn. I'll show it you, I will," he murmured to himself.

"And I shall ever be grateful to you as the preserver of my life," I gasped.

"Preserver! Life preserver!" he laughed, wildly. "Life preserver! Pooh! If you knew what sort of a life preserver! Pooh! what good is it to save a life, when—still, I'll save yours, I will, then perhaps that specter will leave me. Do! do! for once, leave me in peace. Will you not? Will you not?"

All this the man had spoken, turning toward the tree, at first menacingly, but afterward, beseechingly, or coaxingly. Again he became wild, clinched his fists, stared an instant, then sprang suddenly toward the gigantic tree, and disappeared under the drapery of the silver beard which hung on every side from the branches and boughs. He soon reappeared, leading forth by the lasso a mustang already bridled.

"Mount," he called out to me.

"I cannot rise even."

"Then I'll help you." And so saying, he came up to me, raised me with his right hand, so light was I become, on the saddle of my mustang; with the left hand he took the end of my lasso, swung himself on the back of his animal, and drew me and mine after him. This tree appeared to torment him fearfully, he evidently approached it with dread, and yet it attracted him with irresistible power, as if his treasures were hidden there. All at once he furiously gave spurs to his animal, so that it broke out into a gallop. Fortunately, in his dreadful distraction, he had let go of the lasso, or else the first spring of my mustang must have thrown me from the saddle, and broken my feeble limbs. I rode slowly after him.

We had ridden for, perhaps, two hours, the sparks of life which the whisky and water had given me were again on the point of dying, and I felt every minute as though I must sink from the horse, when I perceived a rude inclosure, which at last gave promise of a dwelling. A faint cry of joy escaped me. I tried, but in vain, to give spurs to my horse. My conductor turned around and looked at me wildly, and said in a threatening tone:

"You are impatient, man! impatient! I see—you think perhaps—"

"I shall die if I have not help this minute." I was not able to say another word.

"Pooh! die! die! one does not die so easily. And yet, d—n! it might be true!"

He sprang out of the saddle toward my mustang. It was high time, for, incapable of supporting myself any longer, I sank down into his arms. A few drops of whisky, however, restored me again to consciousness. He now placed me before him on his mustang, and drew my lasso after him. We rode past a potato ground, a corn-field, and a group of peach-trees, and at last the blockhouse was before us.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOTEL.

My strength had so entirely given way that the man was obliged to carry me into the hut; even then I could not stand, and he placed me upon a bench, like a baby. But spite of the failure of my vital powers, I can still recall, very plainly, to my mind's eye, not only the people, but also the furniture, the room, and, in short, the whole scene.

I know not whether it was the spirits which had so excited the mental powers in my exhausted body, but at no period of my life have I taken such notice of objects as I did at this time. All that occurred since my waking out of the death-like swoon, is still clearly impressed upon my mind.

The horrible man, the miserable blockhouse, a log hut with a kind of partition in the center, on the one side a room, on the other a kitchen; the room having, instead of windows, holes covered with perforated paper, the hard trodden ground, at the sides of which grew grass a foot high; the bed in one corner, in the other a kind of sideboard; and creeping between these two corners, like a cat upon the spring, and inexpressibly repulsive, a figure representing the host, with red hair, red pig's eyes, a mouth which reached hideously from ear to ear, and a doggish, downward look, corresponding exactly to the stealthy, cat-like step.

All this is still so vividly before my mind, that I should instantly recognize the man amongst millions were he still alive.

Without welcoming us by word or look, he brought a bottle and two glasses, and placed them on the table, which consisted of three boards, nailed on four posts secured in the ground, and which must have come from some chest or trunk, for there was still partially visible the painted initials of a name, and a date. My preserver allowed the man to perform his duty in silence, but I observed that he followed his movements with a sharp glance. He then filled one of the glasses full, and emptying it at a draught, said—

"Johnny."

Johnny made no answer.

"This gentleman has eaten nothing for four days."

"So!" replied Johnny, without looking up, but sneaking out of one corner into the other.

"Four days, I say, d'ye hear?—four days. Go and bring him, directly, some good, strong tea. I know you have got some, and then some good beef soup. The tea must come directly, and the soup must be ready in an hour at the furthest. D'ye understand? I'll have some whisky and a beef-steak and potatoes. Tell Sambo."

Johnny crept from one corner to the other, as though he had not heard—like a cat's, his last step was always springing.

"I've got money, you understand, Johnny," continued my guide, drawing a pretty well filled purse from his girdle.

Johnny leered with an indefinable expression at the purse, and then sprang forward, looking maliciously at my guide.

Both stood without saying a word. An infernal grin forced itself over Johnny's coarse features. My guide gasped for breath.

"I've got money," he exclaimed, at last, striking the butt of his rifle against the

ground. "D'ye understand, Johnny? money, and a rifle, in case of need."

Having said this, he filled a second glass, which he again emptied at a draught. Johnny stole so softly out of the room, that my companion was only made aware of his retreat by the closing of the wooden latch. No sooner did he perceive this than he came up to me, and, without saying a word, raised me in his arms and carried me to the bed, and laid me down gently upon it.

At length I was aroused somewhat roughly. But I could see nothing, and it was not until I had received a few spoonfuls of tea that my sight became clear. I then saw that a mulatto woman stood by my side and gave me tea with a spoon. The mien in which she did so was at first anything but friendly; and it was only after having given me some few spoonfuls that she began to show anything like womanly sympathy.

In the heart of a woman, of whatever color she may be, there is some chord, if not the tenderest, which is always responsive to a young man. With each spoonful that she gave me her manner became kinder. This refreshment gave me a delightful sensation. At every spoonful it seemed as if a new stream of life flowed into my veins. She laid me down on the pillow much more gently than she had raised me up, and screeched:

"Gor, Gor! poor massa! In an hour massa take some soup?"

"Soup? why soup?" growled Johnny.

"For him—I make it," screeched the mulatto.

"And worse for you! if she don't, I tell ye!" cried Bob.

Johnny muttered something which I could not hear, for a light slumber again overpowered me.

After what seemed to me a few minutes merely, the mulatto duly came with the soup. If the tea had revived, the soup first strengthened the flickering sparks of life. I felt it sensibly pouring strength into my veins and sinews; and, when I had taken it, I could already sit up in the bed.

Whilst I was being fed by the mulatto, I saw Bob eat his beefsteak; it was a piece which might have sufficed for six, but the man seemed to have eaten nothing for three days at least. He cut off pieces of the thickness of your hand, thrust them in his mouth, and then, instead of bread, bit the unpeeled potatoes. To this he added glass after glass.

Sometimes he referred to Johnny, muttering aloud that he was "a sneaking, cowardly fellow; a malicious, false-hearted, gallows-bird. He himself was, mayhap," he laughed, "also a gallows-bird, but still, bold, fair, and open; but Johnny, Johnny, who—"

Johnny sprang upon him, and put both his hands before his mouth, for which he received a blow that sent him to the door, through which he retreated, cursing.

I was just at the point of slumbering again, when Bob crept softly to the door, listened there, and then, with his finger at his mouth, approached my bed.

"Mister!" he whispered; "Mister! you've no need to fear!"

"Fear! why should I be afraid?" I said.

"Why?" he replied, laconically.

"What should I fear?" I continued; "for my life? Are not you there who saved it, when the weight of your thumb might have extinguished it like a candle?"

He looked up.

"That's true; you're right!" he said; "but our planters, you know, trap buffaloes and cows in order to fat and kill them."

"But you are my preserver, my countryman, my fellow Christian; and I'm not a cow nor a buffalo!"

"I'm not, I'm not!" he interrupted, hastily; "I'm not! and yet—yet—"

He got cloudy; then appeared to recollect himself.

I didn't hear what passed further, for the welcome sleep came over me again. During my slumber, I thought I heard, as one hears

in sleep, disputes, intermixed with blows. Nevertheless, it was not the noise, but hunger which awakened me.

When I opened my eyes, I saw the mulatto sitting on my bed side, and keeping off the mosquitoes. She brought me the remainder of the soup, and said, in two hours, I should have as nice a beefsteak as ever came out of the pan, but now I must sleep. Before the two hours had elapsed, so quickly did digestion go on, that I awoke again. My stomach was still worked as by a grater, but now it was an agreeable sensation. I eat the prepared beefsteak with an appetite which is indescribable. Such a luxury was the enjoyment of it, that it half compensated me for the dreadful torments of my hundred hours' fast. But the mulatto, who had seen and treated many cases of the kind, only allowed me a very moderate quantity. In its stead she brought me a large glass of delicious punch. To my question, where she got the rum, sugar, and lemons from, she explained that she herself kept these articles; that Johnny only put up the house, and that badly enough; but that she found the money for conducting it, and also carried on a trade in groceries and mercery goods. She had a whole bag full of lemons, as a present from the Alcade. By degrees the woman got more talkative. She began to complain of Johnny; that he was a desperate gambler, and even worse; that he had already had much money, but had lost it all again, and was often obliged to hide himself; that she had become acquainted with him in lower Natchez, from whence he was obliged to escape by night, and in a fog. Bob was not better; on the contrary—and here she made a movement as of cutting the throat—one who had done very bad things. He was now drunk, had knocked Johnny down, and behaved very strangely. He was lying outside the door, and Johnny had hid himself, but I had no occasion to fear.

"Fear, my good woman, why should I fear?"

She still continued to speak, but I heard no more, for I had again fallen asleep. This time the doze became sound sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MURDERER'S UNEASINESS.

I MIGHT have slept about six or seven hours, when I felt my arm shaken. I did not awake immediately, but the shake was so violent that I screamed out. It was not so much pain at the iron grasp which seized me, as fear, that made me do so. Bob stood by me. The night excess had distorted his features hideously. His eyes were blood-shot and swollen, and rolled about as if he were scourged by demons; his mouth was open; his whole manner resembled that of a man just come from the commission of a fearful deed. He stood before me, like the first murderer over the body of his brother. I shrunk back, terrified.

"For God's sake, man! what is the matter with you?"

He motioned to me to be still.

"You have got the fever!" I cried—"the ague!"

"Ay, the fever!" he groaned; and a cold shudder ran over him. "The fever; but not the fever you mean, young man! A fever. God keep you from such a fever!"

His whole frame trembled as he said this.

"Wilt never be quiet? never leave me in peace for a moment? Will nothing help?" he groaned, pressing his hand against his side. "Nothing at all? Then, God d—! I tell ye," he roared, "if I knew that you, with your God—Creator—Judge, of whom you preached yesterday—By God, I would—"

"Do not curse so fearfully, man!" I cried; "God sees and hears you without cursing. I am no canting priest, but this blasphemous swearing is sinful and disgusting."

"Right, you're right! 'Tis a bad habit;

but I tell ye, for God's sake!—what was I going to say?"

"You were talking about the fever."

"No, I wasn't going to say that; what I was going to say is as well not said, I know that; but you're not chargeable with it. Had no peace before then—the whole eight days didn't leave me peace, nor rest—always drove, like what's his name who killed his—his brother?—drove me under the patriarch—always under the patriarch."

These words were spoken, or rather muttered, in a low voice. It was plain he did not intend me to hear them.

"It's curious," he continued murmuring. "I've made more than one cold, and yet never felt so before. Forgot it in less than no time; but now the whole reckoning comes at once, and I can get no more rest or peace. It's worst in the open prairie; it stands so plain. The old man, with his white beard and his shiny garment, and the specter just behind him. That frightful specter will drive me mad; but it shan't—it shan't!" he repeated, wildly.

I affected not to have heard him.

"What do you say about the specter?" he suddenly asked me.

"I said nothing at all," I replied, soothingly.

His eyes rolled; he clinched and opened his hands, as a tiger does his claws.

"Say nothing—nothing, I advise you!" he repeated, in a low tone.

"I say nothing, my good man, nothing at all, but that I wish you would turn to your God and Maker."

"God! God! Ah, that's the old man, I guess, in the shiny robe, with the long beard, who has the specter behind him. I'll have nothing to do with him—shall leave me in peace—will have rest—will! will!" he groaned. "Do you know you must do me a service?"

"Ten rather than one; everything that lies in my power. Say what I am to do, and it shall be done. I owe you my life."

"You're a gentleman, I see—a Christian. You can; you must."

"He gasped for breath, and became again excited.

"You must go with me to the Alcade."

"To the Alcade, man! What shall I do with you at the Alcade's?"

"You'll see and hear. I've something to say to him; something for his own ear."

Here he fetched a deep breath, paused awhile, looked anxiously on every side, and then whispered:

"Something that nobody else must hear."

"But there's Johnny. Why not take Johnny?"

"Johnny!" he cried, with a scornful laugh. "Johnny, who is no better, but ten times worse than me, bad as I am, and I am bad, to be sure; a bad fellow, very bad, but still open, fair, always went above-board till this time; but Johnny! Johnny would sell his mother. Johnny's a cowardly, sneaking treacherous dog!"

This needed no confirmation, for it was really written on his face, so I held my peace.

"But what do you want with me at the Alcade's?"

"What do I want with you? What does one want people for before a judge? He's a judge—a Texan judge; leastwise, a Mexican judge, but chosen by us Americans, and an American, like you and me."

"And how soon shall we go?"

"Directly! As soon as possible. I can't bear it no longer. It doesn't let me rest. For the last eight days I've endured the torments of hell. It drives me under the patriarch; then away; and then back again. It's worst in the prairie; there the old man stands, in his shiny robe, and the specter behind him. I can see 'em both plainly. It tosses one about dreadfully. I haven't a quiet hour; even the bottle no use. Neither rum, nor whisky, nor brandy drives them away. Curious! I got drunk yesterday to get rid of them, but they wouldn't be driven away—came regularly, both of them, and

forced me up. I must go! Would not let me sleep! I must go under the patriarch."

"And were you over there, under the live oak, in the night?" I cried, terrified.

"Ay, drove one under the patriarch," he groaned. "I'm just come from there. I've made up my mind—"

"Poor man, poor man!" I cried, shudderingly.

"Ay, poor man, indeed," he groaned, in the same unearthly tone of confidence. "Tell ye, 'twill not let me rest, 'twill not! It's now eight days since I thought to cross to San Felipe. Thought I'd got there. When I looked up, where do you think I was? Under the patriarch!"

"Poor, poor man!" I exclaimed again.

"Yes, indeed!" he repeated, with a groan, which pierced one's marrow. "Wherever I go, night or day. I wanted to go to Anahuac; rode across; rode a whole day; where do you think I was at night? Under the patriarch!"

There was something so dreadful in the manner in which he poured forth these words; the remorse of the murderer spoke so clearly, so fearfully, in his rolling eyes, that I shuddered, and turned now from him, and again pityingly to him. With it all, I could not refuse him my sympathy.

"You have been then already under the tree to-day?"

"Ay, and the specter threatened me—said, 'I'll not let you rest, Bob'—Bob's my name—'until you have been to the Alcade and told him—'"

"Then I will go to this Alcade," said I, rising out of my bed, "and directly, if you wish it."

"What do you want? Where are you going?" croaked Johnny, now creeping in. "You shan't go till you've paid."

"Johnny," said Bob, seizing his companion, who was a head shorter than himself, by the shoulders, lifting him like a child, and setting him down again so violently that his knees knocked together—"Johnny, this gentleman's my visitor, d'ye understand? here's the reckonin', and tell ye, Johnny, tell ye—"

"Would ye? would ye?" whimpered Johnny.

"What I would don't concern you, not at all; therefore, I calculate you'd best be quiet."

Johnny crept back into the corner like a dog that has received a kick, but the mulatto would not allow herself to be frightened away. Sticking her arms akimbo, she waddled boldly forward.

"You shan't take the gentleman away," she cried, grumblingly, "you shan't. He's still weak, and can't bear the ride. He can't stand."

CHAPTER VIII.

GOING TO SEE THE ALCALDE.

THAT was really the case. Strong as I had felt in bed, I could scarcely stand out of it. Bob seemed undecided, but only for one instant; in the next he lifted the mulatto, as he had done her partner, a foot from the floor, carried her to the door, kicked it open with his foot, and, setting her down outside, said:

"Silence! some good strong tea, instead of thy cursed tongue; and a tender beefsteak, instead of thyself; that will make the gentleman strong, you old brown, leathern, drunken devil."

The man's decision and brevity, under other circumstances, would not have been uninteresting; even now they created a certain degree of respect. He was, as he said, a bad fellow, but, nevertheless, open and straightforward. I had slept in my clothes, and now wished to leave the room in order to wash my face and hands, and to see after my mustang, but Bob would not allow it. Johnny must bring me water and a towel; then he ordered him to get our mustangs ready. His whine, "What if the mustangs

had broken away, and could not be caught?" he met with, "Must be here in a quarter of an hour; darn't be broke lose; d'ye understand? no tricks! you know me!"

Johnny must have known him well, for before the quarter of an hour had elapsed the animals stood bridled and saddled before the door.

The breakfast, which consisted of tea, butter, wheaten bread, and tender beef-steaks, strengthened me so, that I was enabled to mount my mustang. It is true, I had still much pain in my limbs, but we rode slowly; the morning was serene, and the air buoyant and refreshing.

Our road, or rather path, lay again through the prairie, which, on the side toward the river, was bordered with forests; and on the other, spread out in the distance, ocean-like, and studded with numberless tree islands.

We saw abundance of game, which sprang up nearly under the feet of our mustangs; but, although Bob had his rifle with him, he did not use it; he appeared to see nothing, but talked continually to himself. He seemed to be arranging what he should say to the judge; for I heard him utter some pretty well connected sentences, which disclosed what I would really rather not have heard.

But it was impossible not to hear him, for at times he screamed as though possessed; and when he ceased, the specter appeared to have overshadowed him again. He then stared wildly in the air, shrunk together, groaned, and the feverish shudder, the remorse of the murderer, seized upon him. I waa, as you can well imagine, heartily glad to perceive, at length, the inclosures of the Alcalde's plantation.

A deep silence pervaded the whole scene, which, only broken by the barking of two dogs, gave such solemnity to the dreamlike appearance of the plantation, that even Bob seemed to feel it. He stopped at the gate, and looked doubtfully at the house, like one who stands on a threshold which he is not secure in crossing. He paused for some time. I spoke not a word; I would not on any account have interrupted the inward voice which urged him on; I should have considered it profane; but it lay heavy at my heart while he thus hesitated. With a sudden jerk, which bespoke as sudden a decision, he pushed open the gate, and we rode through two gardens filled with orange, banana, and citron trees, the passage through which was paved off, and led to a court, where was a second gate, with a bell. Upon ringing this, a negro appeared, and opened the house-door.

He appeared to know Bob very well, for he nodded to him as an old acquaintance; told him also that the Alcalde wanted him, and had asked for him several times. He begged to dismount: the breakfast would soon be ready, and the horses should be looked too.

I explained to the negro that I was not come to lay claim to his master's hospitality, but to accompany Bob, who wished to speak with him. It may be observed, *en passant*, that my appearance was anything but adapted for visiting; my clothes were dirty, and partly torn, and I was not at all in a plight to partake of the hospitality of a Texan grandee.

The negro shook his woolly head impatiently.

"Massa, nevertheless, dismount; breakfast shall be served directly; the horses shall be looked to, and——"

Bob interrupted him.

"Don't want breakfast, I tell ye. Want to speak to the Alcalde."

"Massa still in bed," replied the negro.

"Tell him he must get up, Bob has something particular to say to him."

The negro looked at Bob with an expression which would have done honor to the gentleman of an English duke.

"Massa asleep; he not get up for ten Bobs."

"But I've something particular—some-

thing very important—to say to him," replied Bob, assuringly, and almost anxiously.

The negro still shook his woolly head.

"Something important, I tell ye, Ptoly!" he continued, coaxingly, and at the same time stretching his head toward the other; "Something which concerns life and death."

The negro ducked his head, and made toward the house-door.

"Massa not get up till he has slept enough. Ptoly not the fool to wake him for Bob's sake. Massa not get up for ten life or deaths."

The aristocratic negro of the aristocratic Alcalde would at any other time have excited my mirth; but now the scene had something painful in it; it was certainly not a time for laughing.

"When does the Alcalde get up?" I asked.

"In an hour or two."

I looked at my watch—it was stopped; but the negro said it was seven, certainly rather an early hour, for a morning visit, which promised to be anything but agreeable; but, at the same time, late enough to find a Texan squire out of bed. Still his long slumbers did not concern us, and I thought it best to interpose; so I turned to Bob, explaining to him that it was certainly too early for business, and that we must either wait patiently, or return.

"Wait! wait with this torment and the specter," murmured Bob. "I can't wait! I must go back!"

"Massa stay, let Bob ride alone, and come back again in two hours, to see massa," said the negro, with a significant look at Bob, which would possibly have prevailed on me to stay, had not my engagement toward the miserable man been of such a nature as would have stamped my leaving him as the blackest ingratitude.

We therefore rode back together toward Johnny's house. The quiet and agreeable ride had refreshed me, and, although to go there and back had not taken more than two hours, it had sharpened my appetite in such a manner, that I really needed a second breakfast.

Indeed, you cannot imagine the voracious hunger which a ride in the prairie causes, especially after such a "hunger cure" as I had had. One is never satisfied; one's stomach becomes a real abyss, which swallows up everything within its reach. I could scarcely wait until the mulatto brought the steaks.

Bob seemed uncommonly pleased with my appetite. A friendly, melancholy smile passed over him when his wandering look fell on me; but, spite of my persuasions, he would not be induced to take anything. He muttered that what he had to do must be done fasting, and that he would remain fasting until he had got rid of his burden. So he sat down, with his eyes firmly fixed, and the muscles of his face rigid. A stranger entering would have taken him for a specter of the woods.

His sufferings were too intense to be endured long; so, as soon as I had refreshed myself, we again mounted our horses. This time I was able to ride faster, and in less than three-quarters of an hour we were again before the house.

CHAPTER IX.

A CHARACTER.

WE were ushered into what was, for Texas, a handsomely furnished parlor, where we found the Alcalde smoking his cigar. He had just breakfasted, and the plates and dishes, many of them untouched, were still on the table.

He was evidently no great friend to ceremony, and had but little curiosity; for while returning our "good-morning," he scarcely accompanied the salutation with a look. At first sight, it was apparent that he came from West Virginia, or Tennessee, for such gigantic antediluvian figures grew there only.

Even sitting he towered above the negro who was replacing the plates and covers. He had, also, the true West Virginian build, the enormous chest, the massy features, and herculean shoulders, the keen gray eyes; altogether such an *ensemble* as seemed adapted to the backwoods. He looked at Bob with a long, searching glance, but seemed to postpone me for future survey; for, although the negro had now put everything ready for our breakfast, and I had taken a seat, I had not yet been deemed worthy of the honor of a nearer scrutiny.

But there was much tact and self-consciousness in his manner and bearing. It showed, at least, that he understood how to act the part of an Alcalde. Bob had remained standing; his head, still bound by the bloody handkerchief, sunk on his breast. He appeared to feel respect for the Alcalde.

The latter at last commenced:

"Well, Bob, you are here again? I haven't seen you for a long time; I thought you had quite forgotten us, and had gone quite away. Well, Bob, we shouldn't have broke our hearts; for gamblers are hateful to me, I tell you. I hate them, man, worse than polecats. It's a vile thing to gamble, and has ruined many a man in this world and the next. It's ruined you, too, Bob."

Bob said nothing.

"Nevertheless, you'd have been useful last week; you're very useful when you like. One could make a decent citizen of you if you'd only leave off gambling. My step-daughter came last week, and I had to send to Joel to shoot us a buck and a few dozen snipes."

Bob still made no answer.

"Now go into the kitchen, and they'll give you something to eat."

Bob neither went nor answered.

"D'ye hear? Go to the kitchen, and get something to eat. And, Ptoly," said he to the negro, "tell Veny to bring him a pint of rum."

"Don't want rum—ain't thirsty," growled Bob.

"So! so!" replied the judge, laconically; "seems as if you'd already taken more than necessary. You look as if you could eat a live wild cat."

Bob ground his teeth; but the judge did not appear to notice it.

"And you?"—and now he turned to me—"what the devil, Ptoly, are you waiting for? Why don't you serve the breakfast? Where is the coffee?—or do you prefer tea?"

"Thank you, Alcalde, I have breakfasted already."

"Don't look like it. Ain't ill, are you? Where do you come from? What's happened to you? Have you got the ague? What brought you with Bob?"

He now, for the first time, looked searchingly upon me, and was evidently considering what caused the visit, and had brought me in Bob's company. The result of his physiognomical observations did not appear very favorable either for Bob or me.

"You shall hear, judge," I hastened to reply. "I owe Bob much; I have to thank him entirely for my life."

"Your life? thank Bob for your life?" cried the judge, shaking his head incredulously.

"Yes, I owe it to him, indeed; for, in fact, I lost myself in the Jacinto prairie. I wandered about four days without having a morsel in my mouth, and was on the point of perishing, when, yesterday, Bob found me and drew me out of the Jacinto."

"You hadn't——"

"No, no!" I interrupted; "my thirsty mustang sprang with me to the banks of the river, and feeble as I was, I fell in."

"Ay!" said the judge; "so then Bob saved you? Is that true, Bob? Well, I'm glad of it! If you'd only leave Johnny, Bob, it would be better for you. Tell you, Bob, Johnny will be the ruin of you."

All this was spoken seriously, and with

emphasis: but the sentences were broken by draughts and whiffs at the cigar.

"Yes, Bob," he turned again to him; "only keep away from Johnny!"

"It's too late!" replied Bob.

"Don't know how it can be too late. It's never too late to leave off a bad life, man!"

"Calkilate it is, though," replied Bob, sullenly.

"You calculate it is?" said the judge, sharply, fixing his eyes on him; "and why do you calculate that? Take a glass—Ptoly, a glass—and tell me, man, why it's too late?"

"I don't want rum," growled Bob; "something lies on my heart."

"Something lies on your heart?" interrupted the judge, blowing away the clouds from his cigar. "Something lying on your heart; well, Bob, what is it? Take a cigar, man," he said to me. "I'll hear what weighs upon you, Bob; or do you wish to speak to me alone? True, to-day is Sunday, and business should rest on Sunday; but, as you are here, and it lies on your heart, I'll attend to it."

"I've brought the gentleman on purpose with me, as a witness," replied Bob, taking a cigar. Although the judge had not invited him to this, he calmly offered him a light. Bob began to smoke his cigar, made a few grimaces, looked thoughtfully at the judge, and then threw the cigar out of the window.

"It don't relish, squire! nothin' relishes now; gets worse."

"Ah, Bob! if you'd only leave off play and drink! These are your fevers, your ruin."

"That's nothin', squire; nothin' will help now: it must come out. I've fo't long with it! Thought to keep it down; but it don't do. I've stuck many under the ribs; but this—"

"What, have you?" said the judge, who, after he had likewise thrown his cigar out of the window, surveyed Bob with somewhat of a judicial mien. "What's up again? Why speak of the seventh rib? None of your Sodoma and Natchez tricks, I hope! I don't understand such games here."

"Pooh, squire, they understand 'em less in Natchez. If they hadn't, I shouldn't have been in Texas; that is, I'd stopped there. My bones would have been whitening somewhere on a tree, or in a grave."

"I know that, Bob; but the less said about it the better. You promised to leave off the old and to begin a new life; so we won't rake up old tales."

"I wished to—" groaned Bob; "but it's of no use: it must come out—I tell you it must. I shan't be any better till I'm hung."

CHAPTER X.

REMORSE.

I STARED at Bob in astonishment; but the judge took a fresh cigar, lighted it, and after he had commenced it, said composedly:

"Not better till you're hung? No; but why do you want to be hung? Certainly you ought to have been hanged long ago, unless all the newspapers in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi have told lies about you. But that was over in the States: here we are in Texas, under Mexican laws. It doesn't concern us here, what you've done over there, so that you do nothing here. Where there's no accuser there's no judge."

"Ho! but there is an accuser," replied Bob, in a low tone, and shuddering.

"An accuser! and who is it?" demanded the judge, looking at me.

"Who's the accuser?" murmured Bob. "Who's the accuser?" he repeated, alternately staring at the judge and at me. Then, suddenly, and with some indication of self-respect, he added: "Send the nigger out, squire; what a citizen has to say shouldn't be heard by black ears."

"Ptoly, go away!" said the judge. Then

turning again to Bob, "Say what you have to say, or wish to say; but mind, no one forces you to do it; it's only out of goodwill that I listen to you at all—for it's Sunday."

"Know it," murmured Bob; "I know that, squire; but it doesn't let me rest. I've tried everything. I've gone across to San Felipe de Austin, up to Anahuac; it was no use! Wherever I go the specter follows me, and drives me back under the patriarch."

"Under the patriarch?" exclaimed the judge.

"Ay, under the patriarch," groaned Bob. "Do you know the patriarch? not far from the ford on the Jacinto."

"I know! I know!" rejoined the judge; "and what drives you under the patriarch?"

"What drives me?" murmured Bob to himself. "What drives a man who—"

"A man who—" demanded the judge, quickly.

"One who"—continued Bob, in the same low tone—"one who—lies there, under the patriarch, one whom I—"

"Whom you—" quickly demanded the judge again.

"Whom I killed," gasped out Bob, with an impatient jerk.

"Killed!" exclaimed the judge, in a stronger and harsher voice. "You?"

"Yes; I. Why don't you let me speak? You'll always have your palaver!" cried Bob, peevishly.

"You're getting saucy, Bob!" said the judge—who now likewise became impatient—but in a tone so keen, and yet so calm, that it was quite unnatural to me. I involuntarily felt as if the knife was at my throat; for this tone would cause suspicion of anybody. I had never heard a murder so discussed before. I listened more attentively; perhaps my excited nerves and senses had deceived me. The discourse might have been of an awkwardly killed bear or panther. For a moment I thought it must be so; the countenance of the judge was so business-like, and exhibited so little—in fact, not the slightest—emotion.

But Bob—his anxiety and desperation! the dreadful inquietude with which he reluctantly, and in piecemeal, made his confession, as though driven to do so by fiends. The frightful torment which devoured him; his eyes, now rolling like furies, now fixed and set as if staring at a ghost! My philosophy was here at a standstill, my knowledge of the world was at fault. Nevertheless, the judge continued to smoke as calmly as though, as before, the discourse had been of a cow or calf that had been killed unskillfully; sight and hearing failed me at such insensibility.

The judge, meanwhile, must have pretty well read my thoughts in my countenance; for, after looking at me a moment, he said, not without a sarcastic smile, "If you think, stranger, to find here the good company, as it is called in our country, you will possibly be undeceived sooner than may be pleasant. We have neither New York nor Boston fine gentlemen here; don't want them either, and can easily spare them. 'Twill still, thank God! be some time longer, ere your New York, London, and Parisian dandies come to us, and teach us their manners, which, reckoned up, are perhaps not a straw better than those of the poor devil who stands here before you. With us the devils are not so black, as with you the angels are not so white, as they are painted. You'll become acquainted here with a different philosophy to what you have learned from books." He then turned coolly again to Bob, "Tell us more, man. I reckon it's nothing more than one of your usual tantrums."

Bob shook his head. The judge looked at him sternly for an instant, and then said, in a confidential, encouraging tone:

"Under the patriarch, too; and how came he under the patriarch?"

"Dragged him there, and buried him, I suppose," replied Bob.

"Dragged him there? and how came it that you dragged him there?"

"Because he couldn't well go himself with more than half an ounce of lead in his body."

"And you put the half-ounce of lead into him, Bob? Well, if it had been Johnny, you'd have done the country a service, and saved us a rope."

Bob shook his head.

"'Twasn't Johnny though; you must listen a bit longer. You know it's just ten days ago that you counted me out twenty dollars fifty—"

"Quite right, Bob! twenty dollars fifty cents, and advised you to let the money remain until you had got a few hundred dollars or so together, and could buy a bit of land; but it's of no use talking to you."

"No use!" interrupted Bob; "the devil always drives me on: he is determined to have me: he instigated me; and I wished to go up to San Felipe, to the Mexicans, to try my luck there, and also to consult the doctor."

"What do you want with the doctor? You'd have got rid of your fever long ago, if you'd only have left off drinking for a fortnight; fevers are not so very bad here. But it is a disease with you, Bob. You're a wild, reckless fellow; and then, your connection with Johnny; we'll put an end to his mischief, however; all the neighbors are agreed on that. Well, and so you were on your way to San Felipe?"

CHAPTER XI.

BOB'S COMPANION.

"YES; and as I went on my way, the devil, or my ill luck, one or the other, I calkilate, led me to pass by Johnny's house. I certainly wanted a glass, but did not intend to dismount; but as I looked from the back of my mustang, through the window, I could see a man sitting at the table and enjoying himself over a plate of beefsteaks and some potatoes, with a stiff glass of grog. That gave me an appetite, but I would not dismount. While I was looking at him, and considering, that devil, Johnny, came sneaking and whispered to me to come in; there was a man inside, with whom somethin' might be done if we went to work cleverly, for he had a belt of money round his waist that was cram full; and if he just had half a game, by way of bait, he would be sure to bite. I wasn't very much inclined," continued Bob, "and calkilated and considered for some time; but Johnny was so friendly and coaxing, as he can be when he likes, that at last I got off my horse, and as I got off, the dollars in my pouch jingled, and then I wished to play, and walked in briskly. I walked in," continued he. "One glass followed another. There were beefsteaks, and potatoes too, but I only ate a few mouthfuls, and had two, three, or four glasses, when Johnny brought out the cards and dice. 'Holla, Johnny!' said I; 'cards and dice, Johnny. I've twenty dollars fifty cents in my pocket; let's have a game, Johnny; but no drink, for I know you well, Johnny; I know you.'"

"Johnny laughed slyly, and rattled the cards and dice, and we began to play. We played and drank too, though I didn't mean to drink; but I drank more than Johnny. With every glass I got more eager, and my dollars got fewer. I reckoned, however, that the stranger would join in, and that we should be able to pluck him; but he sat and ate and drank as if it did not at all concern him. In order to tempt him, we pretended to play badly; but it was all of no use: he went on calmly eating and drinking. In less than half an hour I was cleared out. My twenty dollars fifty cents were gone to the devil, or what is the same thing, into Johnny's pocket. When it was all gone, squire, everything seemed to swim before my eyes. It hasn't been so often. I've lost more money a hundred times, but never

cared a hundredth nor a thousandth part so much about it as I did about losing these twenty dollars fifty cents. You know I had laid about in the prairie and forests for two whole months to earn them and had got the fever. Now I had the fever, and no money to cure it. I felt so mad, I would have fought with a jaguar. Meanwhile, Johnny jingled my dollars, and only laughed in my face. I aimed a blow at his head, which, if he hadn't sprung aside, would certainly have prevented his laughing for a week or two. Presently, however, he sneaked up to me again, and winked, and then whispered to me quietly—

"Bob, are you cast down all at once like this? Are you," said he, blinking with his eyes toward the belt which the man had about his waist—"are you got so cowardly that you can't see a belt of money which is to be had for half an ounce of lead?"

"Did he say that?" asked the judge.

"Ay, he said so," said Bob; "but I would not hear of anything of the sort. I told him if he had a mind to the belt, he might take it himself from the owner. I wasn't going to draw the chestnut out of the hot ashes for him; he might go and be d—d. So I spurred my mustang, and rode away like fury. While I was riding," continued Bob, "my head went round like a mill. The twenty dollars and fifty cents lay heavily on my mind. I didn't know what to do. I daren't come to you, for I knew you would scold me."

"I shouldn't, Bob. Perhaps I should have blowed you up, but for your good. I'd have summoned Johnny before me, have called together a jury of twelve neighbors, and have helped you to your twenty dollars and fifty cents, and put Johnny out of the country, or better still, out of the world."

These words were spoken, it was true, with much phlegm, but still with a feeling and sympathy, which gave me a better opinion of the worthy judge's conscience. They seemed also to affect Bob beneficially. He fetched a deep sigh, and then looked touchingly at the Alcalde.

"It's too late," he murmured—"it's too late, squire."

"Perhaps not," rejoined the judge; "but let's hear further."

"Well," continued Bob, "I rode on at random till evening, and I found myself near the palmetto field, you know, on the opposite bank to the Jacinto."

The judge nodded.

"I rode on toward it, and as I rode, I heard the trampling of a horse. As I heard that, I felt as I had never felt in my life; I went queer and cold all over. It was as if a host of evil spirits were howling in my ears. I lost my recollection, and knew no longer where I was. I could see nothing but the well-filled money-belt, and my twenty dollars fifty cents. Presently I heard a voice call to me: 'Where do you come from? and where are you going, countryman?'"

"Where?" I murmured—"where? to the devil, and you may go and tell him I'm coming."

"You may take that message to him yourself," said the stranger, laughing; "my road does not lead that way."

"As he spoke, I looked up, and saw that it was the man with the money-belt. It's true I knew that before; but I had not looked up."

"Aren't you the man," said he, "I saw over there in the inn?"

"And if I am, what's that to you?" said I to him.

"Nothing," said he; "it does not concern me," said he.

"Well, there, go on your way," said I.

"I will," said he; "a word's no blow," said he. "I expect your loss hasn't exactly put you in a church-going humor," said he. "If I were you, I wouldn't stake my dollars upon cards and dice."

"That he should thus throw my loss in my teeth, made me as mad as a wild cat. I

tried to keep it back, but my bile rose; I felt it get malicious.

"You're a nice fellow," said I, "to cast one's loss in one's teeth. You're a good-for-nothing fellow!"

"I wished to put him in a passion, and then fight him. But he had no desire for fighting, and said, quite humbly:

"I don't cast it in your teeth. God keep me from throwing it in your teeth! On the contrary, I pity you. You don't look to me like one who has many dollars to lose. You look to me like a hard-working man, who must earn his bread hardy."

"Yes, indeed!" said I, "I earn my money hardy!"

"And thus talking, we were almost at the upper end of the cane-brake, near to the wood which borders the Jacinto, and I had closed up to him and the devil tight to me. 'A hard-working man, indeed,' said I—"and I've lost all; I haven't a cent for a bite of tobacco."

"If that's all," said he, "that's easily helped. It's true, I don't chew myself, and am not a rich man; I've a wife and child, and need every cent I have; but to assist a countryman is only one's duty. You shall have money for a bite and a dram."

"And so saying, he reached a purse out of his pocket, in which he had change. The purse was pretty full, contained perhaps twenty dollars, and it was, to me, as if the devil mocked at me out of the purse."

"Halves!" said I.

"No, not that," said he. "I've a wife and child, and what I have belongs to them; but half a dollar."

"Halves!" said I, again, "or—"

"Or?" said he; and so saying, he put the purse in his pocket again, and reached the rifle, which he had over his shoulder.

"Don't force me," said he, "to do you harm, don't," said he; "you might repent it. What you're thinking of brings no blessing."

CHAPTER XII.

BOB'S CONFESSION CONTINUED.

"I HEARD no more, and saw no more. I felt as if a legion of evil spirits possessed me. 'Halves!' I screamed out; and as I screamed out, he sprang up in the saddle, and fell backward over his horse's back."

"I'm a dead man!" he murmured; "God have mercy upon me! My poor wife! my poor child!"

Bob now stopped, his breath failed him, and the perspiration stood in great drops on his forehead. He stared fearfully toward a corner of the room. The judge also turned pale. I tried to rise, but fell back again; I should have sunk but for the table. There was a solemn pause. At last the judge murmured:

"A hard, hard case! Father, mother, children, all at one blow! Bob, you are a bad fellow! a terrible fellow! a great villain!"

"A great villain!" groaned Bob; "the ball had gone right through his breast."

"Perhaps the gun went off at half cock," said the judge, speaking in a low tone, and almost anxiously; "perhaps it was his own ball?"

Bob shook his head.

"No. I know better. I remember, plainly, how he said: 'Don't do that; don't force me to injure you. We might both repent it.' But I pulled; 'twas the devil made me do it. His ball is still in his rifle."

"As he lay before me," continued Bob, groaning, "I can't tell you how I felt. 'Twasn't the first I had made cold; but now I'd have given all the money in the world not to have done the deed. It shall be the last. It must be the last, for it does not let me rest. It's the worst in the prairie, as I've said before; the very worst! Never leaves me in the prairie; always drives me under the patriarch. I must have dragged him under the patriarch, and buried him

there with my hunting-knife, for I found him there afterward."

"Found him there!" exclaimed the judge.

"Yes. I don't know how he came there; I must have brought him there, I suppose, for I found him there. But I recollect nothing but the words—"God have mercy upon me! I'm a dead man! my poor wife, my poor children!" Truly, no blessing comes from what I have done!" he groaned again; "I've found already that it brings none. The words are for ever and ever ringing in my ears!"

The judge got up, and walked hastily up and down the parlor, in deep thought. All at once he stopped.

"What have you done with his money?"

"I wished to go to San Felipe," said Bob, "so I took his purse with me, but buried his pouch with him, and a flask of rum, and bread and beefsteaks, which he had brought away from Johnny's. I rode the whole day. In the evening, when I got down to enter the inn I thought was before me, where do you think I was?"

The judge and I stared at him.

"Under the patriarch. Instead of letting me go to San Felipe, the ghost of the murdered man had led me under the patriarch. Would not let me rest there until I had dug him up and buried him again, without the belt."

The judge shook his head.

"The next day I tried another direction. I was out of tobacco, so I rode to Anahuac, through the prairie. But in the prairie it was really dreadful. Whichever way I turned, a man with a white beard and shiny robe stood before me. I thought it was God. At his side, and threatening me, was the ghost of the man I murdered. I spurred my horse till the blood ran, in order to get rid of them. I wished to get to Anahuac at any price, and hoped soon to get it out of my head there, so I rode the whole day, as if for life or death. In the evening, when I looked up, expecting to see the salt works, where do you think that I was again! Right under the patriarch. I dug him up again, examined him all over, and then buried him again."

"Strange, that!" exclaimed the judge.

"Yes," added Bob. "It's all of no use, I tell you—will not let me rest—I shan't be better till I'm hung."

Bob was visibly relieved after having said this. And, strange as it may seem, I felt relieved, too, and involuntarily nodded assent. The judge alone preserved an unmoved countenance.

"So," said he—"so you think it won't be better till you are hanged?"

"Yes," replied Bob, eagerly; "hung on the patriarch, where he's buried."

The judge took a cigar, lit it, and then said:

"Well, if you will have it so, we'll see what can be done for you. I'll call the neighbors together, to-morrow, for a jury."

"Thank ye, squire," said Bob, evidently relieved.

"I'll call a jury together," repeated the Alcalde, "and then see what can be done for you. Perhaps you'll change your mind by that time."

I looked at him, as though he had fallen from the clouds. He did not seem to notice it.

"Perhaps there's another way of getting rid of your life, if you are tired of it," continued he, taking the cigar out of his mouth; "perhaps we can hit on one, without pinching your conscience."

Bob shook his head. I involuntarily did the same.

"At all events, we'll hear what the neighbors say," said the judge, again.

Bob now got up, and went to the judge, offering him his hand, to say good-bye. The latter did not take it. Turning to me, he said, "I think you had better stay here."

Bob turned round, impetuously.

"The gentleman must go with me."

"Why must he?" asked the judge.

"Ask him."

I explained once more the obligation I owed to Bob, the manner in which we had been thrown together, and how he had taken care of me at Johnny's.

The judge nodded approvingly, but then said, decisively, "Nevertheless, you will remain here, in fact, all the more so; and, Bob, you go alone. You're in that mood, Bob, in which you are best alone, d'ye understand? and so you go, and leave the young man here. Another misfortune might happen, and, at any rate, he's better here than with either you or Johnny. Come back to-morrow, then we'll see what is to be done for you."

These words were spoken with a tone of decision, which people of Bob's character seldom venture to oppose. He nodded assent, and left the room. I sat still, like one stupefied, staring at the singular man who had appeared so inhuman during these strange proceedings.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ALCALDE.

WHEN Bob was gone, the Alcalde blew in a shell, which served instead of a bell. Then he took the cigar-box into his hand, tried one cigar after another, broke them peevishly, and threw them out of the window. The negro, who had entered at the summons, stood some time, while his master still broke the cigars and threw them out of the window. At last his patience seemed to fail him.

"Hark ye, Ptoly!" he growled to the affrighted black, "if you ever bring cigars in the house again which neither draw nor smoke, I'll make your back smoke for it, I promise you. There isn't one worth a straw. Tell that old brown chestnut hag of Johnny's I'll have no more of her cigars. Ride over to Mr. Ducie's, and fetch a box. Tell him to send good ones. And, d'ye hear? tell him, at the same time, I have a few words to say to him and the neighbors. Ask him to bring them to-morrow. And, d'ye hear! come back directly; mind you're home again by two o'clock. Take the mustang we caught the week before last, and see how he goes."

The negro listened to these numerous orders and commissions with open mouth and eyes, stared perplexedly at his master, and then made toward the door.

"Where are you going, Ptoly?" called the Alcalde after him.

"To Massa Ducie."

"Without a pass, Ptoly? And what do you want with Mr. Ducie?"

"Him not send so bad cigars—him brown chestnut hag—massa speak to Johnny and the neighbors—the neighbors bring Johnny with them."

"I thought so," said the judge, without changing countenance. "Wait a bit; I'll write a pass, and a line or two to Mr. Ducie."

So saying, he wrote a pass and note, and gave both to the negro. When he was gone, he took up the cigar-box again, and lit the first which came in his hand. I also took one, which drew capitally; they were excellent "principes."

We sat smoking until the sound of the negro's horse's hoofs died away, then he blew again in the shell. Another negro entered.

"Xeni," said he to this one, "ride over to Mr. Stones—Abraham Enoch Stones, d'ye understand? Ask him to come over early to-morrow morning, to take up the border of peach clumps. Tell him, too, to bring the neighbors with him. Stop! I'll give you a few lines or you'll make a blunder. You must be back by two o'clock, d'ye hear! He handed the pass and note to the negro and re-commenced smoking. All at once he turned to me.

"I say, Mr. —, what is your name?"

"Edward Nathaniel Morse."

"Morse? are you related to Judge Morse, at Washington?"

"His son."

He raised his glass to touch mine, I did the same, and we drank. We sat for some time, sipping our glasses, without exchanging a word. The punch was delicious! At last he broke the silence.

"I tell you, Mr. Morse, I would give ten of my best cows for this not to have happened to Bob."

You must know, in Texas, everything is reckoned by the cattle. They are the staple article, the universal currency, the circulating medium. The doctor is paid for his medical treatment with a cow—the teacher for his instruction, the advocate for pleading before the court of justice.

"I believe it, willingly," I replied; "but it has happened."

"As certainly as Moses was a Hebrew. How do you relish the ananas punch? He deserves to be hanged, like a dead buck, and yet—"

This "yet" made me stop again, and set down the glass I had to my lips.

"Can't be done, even if we wished. Should have a good deal to do if we were to hang all who—"

"Much to do if you hanged all who commit murder?" I hastily interrupted. "Good God, what must be that sociable—"

"Condition?" he completed, quite calmly, and lighting a cigar. "Yes; well," he continued, after having brought it to smoke, "just as sociable a state as can be in a country which, three times larger than the State of New York,* or, perhaps, even Virginia, still scarcely contains thirty-five thousand souls—a wilderness—'tis a magnificent wilderness, it's true, but still only a wilderness."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE trampling of a horse awakened me the following morning. On looking out, I saw Bob, who, having arrived, dismounted at once from his mustang. But what a dismounting! So staggering, so uncertain were his movements, that it seemed as if his limbs refused to perform their duties. At first I thought he was drunk, but he was not. It was the deadly weariness of the body, occasioned by the torments of the soul. He looked like one just taken from the rack. The last four-and-twenty hours had told fearfully upon him.

I threw on my clothes hastily, sprang down the stairs, and opened the house door. I found him resting his head on the neck of his mustang, with his hands crossed, and alternately shuddering and uttering a deep groan.

"Bob, is it you?" He gave me no answer. "Bob, won't you come into the house?" said I, trying to take hold of one of his hands.

He looked up, stared, but did not appear to recognize me. I drew him away from his mustang, tied it to a post, and then led him into the house. He did not resist me, but followed, apparently without will, and without strength.

As I placed him on a seat, he fell on it so that it cracked, and shook the whole house. But I could not get him to utter a word. I was just thinking of returning to my bedroom to arrange my toilet, when I again heard the trampling of horses.

This was occasioned by two horsemen, who were followed, at some distance, by several others, all dressed in hunting shirts, buckskin trousers and jackets, and armed with rifles and bowie-knives; stout, daring-looking fellows, evidently from the South-western States, with the genuine Kentucky, half-horse half-alligator profile, and the usual accompaniments of thunder, lightning and earthquake.

I thought that two or three thousand such men would certainly be a match for an army of Mexicans, if the latter resembled

*New York has about 50,000 English square miles, Texas 150,000, therefore nearly three-fourths of the area of France.

the spindle-shanks I had seen on landing, for these giants could, conveniently, carry off a Mexican in each hand. Moreover, the sensation was pleasant to see them, with the real Kentucky, devil-may-care mien, dismount, throw the bridles of their horses into their negroes' hands, and then enter the house just like people who, everywhere at home, showed themselves to be more the masters of Texas than the Mexicans themselves.

They appeared decidedly the men who could raise Texas to independence. On entering the parlor they nodded me a "good-morning," but rather coldly, for their falcon eyes had immediately perceived Bob with me, a coincidence which appeared to strike them, although they treated it as worthy of little notice. Nevertheless, I observed, that without stopping their conversation they frequently threw very sharp looks upon me.

Presently some others came, so that the number was increased to fourteen, all of whom were firm, decided-looking fellows, except two, who did not please me much. Neither did they appear to please the others, for no one shook hands with them, but all merely saying, "Good-morning," gave them a silent nod. I noticed, too, that they alone went toward Bob, and endeavored, but in vain, to draw him into conversation.

Meanwhile, the judge, to guess from the noise in the neighboring cabinet, was getting up and occupied with his toilet, which, however, did not keep him long, for scarcely had three minutes passed from the creaking of the bed, before the door opened and he entered.

Twelve of the men stepped friendly and heartily toward him, the other two remained in the background, and it was only the former whom he shook by the hand.

When he had shaken hands with the twelve, and nodded coolly to the two, he stepped toward me and introduced me to his guests. Now I learnt for the first time that I stood before no less important personages than the ayuntamiento, or jury, consisting of the land occupiers of San Felipe de Austin; that two of my worthy countrymen were corregidores; one a procurador, the others only *buenos hombres*, or freeholders; a title which, however, they did not seem to hold in much regard, for they addressed each other by their surnames only.

The negro now brought a lighted candle, and arranged the cigar-case and the chairs; the judge pointed to the sideboard and to the cigars, and then seated himself. Some took a dram, others lit a cigar.

A considerable time elapsed, during which they were silently engaged in pouring out spirits, lighting cigars, and making them draw. During all this time, Bob writhed about on his chair like a worm.

"Now, at last," I thought, "they will begin business;" but I was mistaken. "Mr. Morse," said the judge to me, "be good enough to help yourself." I did so. He signaled to me to touch glasses. I advanced and touched with him, and all others. Still I must take a cigar and light it.

When this was done, he rested his arms upon the arms of his chair, and nodded contentedly. There was something formal and wearisome, but at the same time patriarchally dignified, in this grave procedure. It seemed to me to be characteristically American.

As we dispense with all outward forms, our earnest national character has, in this dignified and circumspect preliminary gravity, supplied, as I think very fortunately, for the ceremonial and formalities of other nations in their judicial and public transactions.

At last, after all had drank, and had commenced smoking their cigars, the judge, setting aside his cigar, said, "Men!"

"Squire!" said the men.

"We've a business before us which I calculate will be best explained by him whom it concerns."

The men looked at the squire, then at Bob, then at me.

"Bob Rock, or whatever your name is, if you have anything to say, say it," said the judge.

"Told it all yesterday," muttered Bob, his face still between his hands and his elbows on his knees.

"Yes, but you must say it again; yesterday was Sunday, and Sunday, you know, is a day of rest, and not of business. I look at that which you said yesterday as if you had not said it. I will not judge you nor let you be judged by what you said yesterday. I consider you said that only in confidence, for I don't reckon Mr. Morse—I regard him still as a stranger."

"What's the use of this everlasting palaver, when the thing's clear enough?" said Bob, peevishly, and raising his head as he spoke.

The men now looked at him, and as they did so, a dark gloomy earnestness spread itself over their iron features.

He was really fearful to look at; his countenance a dark blue, his cheeks hollow, his beard ragged, his blood-shot eyes rolling deep in the sockets! There was scarcely anything human in his features.

"As Mississippi water," added the judge, thoughtfully; "clear as Mississippi water when it has stood four-and-twenty hours. I tell you, man, I will not condemn any man on his own word alone, much less you who have been in my family, at least in my service, and have eaten my bread."

Bob drew a deep breath.

"You accused yourself yesterday, it is true, but your self-accusation may be accounted for—you have the fever."

"It's no use, squire," groaned Bob, as though moved by the judge's kindness; "it's all of no use; I see you mean well. But though you might save me from the hands of men, you can't save me from myself. It's no use, I must be hung—on the patriarch—the same tree he lies under whom I made cold."

CHAPTER XV.

THE EXAMINATION.

THE jurors looked up again, but did not speak a word.

"It's no use," continued Bob; "if he had only threatened me, if he had begun the dispute, had only refused me; but he didn't. It sounds now in my ears what he said: 'Don't do that; don't compel me to do what we may both repent. Don't do it, man; I've a wife and child. What you intend brings no blessing.' But I wouldn't listen," groaned he, from the bottom of his breast; "heard nothing but the devil's voice; I leveled the rifle, drew the trigger."

His groans were fearful, and sounded more like the suppressed bellowing of an ox than of a human being. His agony seemed now to move even the iron twelve. They looked at him with keen but sidelong glances.

"So you have killed a man?" demanded at last a deep, bass voice.

"Yes, I have!" gasped Bob, and as he gasped out these words, he looked fixedly at the questioner, with his mouth wide open.

"And how did it happen?" demanded the same man, further. "How did it happen?"

"How did it happen? ask the devil—ask Johnny; no, not Johnny—he can't tell you; he wasn't there. No one can tell you but me, and I can scarcely tell you; I don't know myself how it happened. Met the man at Johnny's—Johnny stirred up the devil in me; showed me his belt full of money."

"Johnny?" exclaimed several of the jury.

"Yes, Johnny. Reckoned on winning his money; but he was too cunning, too clever for him, and when he plucked my feathers—my twenty fifty—"

"Twenty dollars fifty cents," exclaimed the judge, "which he had received from me

for killing game, and catching mustangs."

The men nodded.

"And you killed the man because he wouldn't play again?" asked the man with a bass voice.

"No, not for some hours after—by the Jacinto, not far from the patriarch—met him below, and killed him there."

"Thought there must be something strange there," interrupted one of the jury, for there was a whole nation of vultures, and turkey buzzards, and that kind of carrion about, as we rode by. Wasn't there, Mr. Heart?"

Mr. Heart nodded.

"Met him near the patriarch, and demanded halves of his money," continued Bob. "Said he was willing to give me something to buy a quid, and more than that, but not halves. Said he'd a wife and child."

"And you?" demanded again the man with the bass voice, which now sounded hollow.

"Shot him down," said Bob, with a wild, hoarse laugh.

There was a dead pause for some time, and all sat with their eyes turned downward; at last he with the bass voice went on:

"And who was the man?"

"Ah, who was he? Didn't ask him who he was, and it warn't written on his face. Was a citizen, but whether a Hoosier, or Buckeye, or a Mudhead, is more than I can tell."

"The thing must be inquired into, Alcalde, said another jurymen, after a long pause.

"It must," rejoined the Alcalde.

"What's the good of so much inquiry?" grumbled Bob.

"What good?" replied the judge. "Because it is a duty we owe to ourselves, to the dead man, and to you; because we can't condemn you without having seen the *corpus delicti*. There is another matter too," continued he, turning to the jury, "to which I must call your attention. The man is half beside himself—not *compos mentis*, as we say. He's got the fever, and had it when he did the deed. Moreover, was incited by Johnny, when in a state of desperation about his loss; and spite of his excitement, he saved the life of this gentleman here, Mr. Edward Nathaniel Morse."

"Did he?" asked the jurymen with the deep bass voice.

"He did, indeed, and in more ways than one," said I; he not only drew me out of the deep river into which, when nearly dead, I had been thrown by my mustang, and in which I should certainly have been drowned, but he also forced the most careful attention for me from the man called Johnny, and his mulatto. But for him, I should certainly not be alive now; of that I can take my oath."

Bob now gave a look upon me which went through my heart. It was so touching to see tears in such eyes! The men listened in deep silence.

"It appears that you were led on to this by Johnny, Bob?" interrupted again the bass voice.

"I didn't say that; I only said he blinked at the money-bag, and said to me—"

"What did he say?"

"What does it matter what he said?" replied Bob, sullenly. "It doesn't concern you, I calculate."

"But it does concern us," rejoined one of the jury; "it does concern us."

"Well, if it does concern you, you may as well know," growled Bob again. "He said, as I went madly out of the house, he said, 'Are you then got so chicken-hearted, Bob, as to take to your heels when not ten steps from you there is a well-filled belt to be had for little more than half an ounce of lead?'"

"Did he say that?" asked the bass voice again.

"Ask him himself," said Bob.

"But we ask you."

"Yes, he did say so."

"Did he really say it?"

"I've already told you so; what's the use

of this everlasting palaver? He did say it; but you'd better ask him yourselves. I don't wish to tread upon the corns of any one's conscience; mine are thick enough, I promise you. I only want my own cut out; and they must be cut out. If you want to cut his out, go to him yourselves. I'll only speak for myself, and I'll be hanged for myself."

"Quite right, quite right, Bob," rejoined the Alcalde. "But we can't hang you before we have convinced ourselves that you deserve it. What say you, Mr. Wythe, you're the procurador, and you Mr. Heart, and Mr. Stone? Help yourself to rum or brandy—and Mr. Bright and Irwin, take a fresh cigar. They're considerable tolerable, the cigars. Arn't they? Mr. Wythe, that brandy in the diamond bottle, what do you say to it?"

My aristocratical democrat had become so entirely democratic, that under any other circumstances it would have extorted a laugh from me, but here I could not laugh. Mr. Wythe, the procurador, had raised himself, I thought to deliver his verdict, but it had not come to that yet. He stepped deliberately to the sideboard, and seizing the diamond bottle with one hand, and a glass with the other, said:

"Well now, squire," said he, "or rather, Alcalde—"

After the word "Alcalde" he filled the glass half full of rum.

"It's this," continued he, pouring in a quarter of an inch of water, and then adding a few lumps of sugar—"Bob killed the man—murdered him." He went on crushing sugar with the wooden pestle. "And if so, I calculate"—here he raised the glass—"Bob, if he wishes it"—he concluded by bringing the glass to his mouth and emptying it—"ought to be hanged."

Bob seemed to have had a heavy weight taken from him. He breathed more freely. The jurors nodded in silence.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER THE TRIAL.

"WELL!" said the judge, but not without shaking his head—"if you are of that opinion, and Bob is agreed, I calculate we may as well do as he wishes at once."

"Certainly," replied the procurador. "By rights it ought to be brought before the district court at San Antonio, but as he is one of our own people, we must, in mercy, wink at it for once, and do him this favor."

"But I tell you I don't do it willingly," said the Alcalde. "I will do it, certainly; but at any rate, I must have the murdered man found, and Johnny examined. We owe that to ourselves, and to Bob as a citizen."

"By all means," said the jury, with one voice.

"But what's Johnny got to do with it?" interrupted Bob, surlily. "I've already told you a dozen times he wasn't present; it doesn't concern him."

"But it does concern him," rejoined the judge; "it does concern him, man! He may not have been there, but he sent you to do it—if not in terms, yet still with a secret incentive. If it hadn't been for Johnny, in the first place, you would never have seen either the man or the money bag; in the second place, you wouldn't have lost your twenty fifty; and in the third place, the notion wouldn't have come in your head to have retrieved your loss out of his well-filled purse by half an ounce of lead."

"That's a fact," exclaimed the jury, unanimously.

"You're a dreadful murderer, Bob, and a considerable one as well," continued the judge; "but yet I tell you, and don't care who hears me, to your face—I won't flatter you, but I tell you, I've more regard for your little finger than for Johnny's whole hide. And I'm sorry for you, for I know at

bottom you are not a bad fellow, though you have been misled by a bad example and bad company. But I calculate you could still be made right and useful for many things perhaps more than you think for. Your rifle is a capital good rifle."

The last words made them all look up. Fixing their eyes keenly and inquiringly on Bob, they waited with fixed attention, while the judge continued, in an encouraging manner:

"You could perhaps do the country, your injured fellow-citizens, and the broken laws, a better service than by being hanged. You are still worth a dozen Mexicans."

During these observations of the judge, Bob had sunk his head upon his breast. He now looked up, at the same time fetching a deep breath.

"I understand, squire! I see what you are aiming at. But I can't—I daren't wait so long. My life's a burden to me. He torments me cruelly. Lets me have no peace day nor night."

"You should lie down," observed the judge.

"But he comes before me then; he's always drivin' me back under the patriarch."

Here several of the jury looked at the speaker, and then cast their eyes again on the ground. They sat thus in deep silence for some time; at last they raised their heads and looked inquiringly at each other. The judge—then resumed:

"It comes then to this, Bob. We'll go to-day to the patriarch, and you can come to-morrow. Will that do for you?"

"What time?"

"About ten o'clock."

"Can't it be earlier?" said Bob, impatiently.

"Why earlier? Are you then in such a hurry for the gallows?" observed Mr. Heart.

"What's the use of all this palaverin'?" said Bob, sulkily; "I tell you he won't let me rest—I must get out of the world—he drives me out of it; so the sooner the better. I am tired of life, and if I don't come till ten, and then you take up an hour or two with your palaver, and then again an hour or two ridin' to the patriarch, I shall have the fever again."

"But we can't fly about like wild geese on account of your fever," exclaimed the procurador, impatiently. "Exercise a little judgment, man!"

"Certainly not," replied Bob humbly.

"It's an ugly visitor, the fever, Mr. Wythe," remarked Mr. Trace, taking a fresh glass. "And I calculate," continued he, emptying it, "we ought to oblige him."

"What do you say to it, squire?" asked the procurador.

"I calculate Bob is really a little too hasty," replied the judge, peevishly, and shaking his head. All kept silence. "But if you think so," continued he, turning to the ayuntamiento, "and because you are satisfied, Bob," he turned to him, "I calculate we must do as you wish."

"Thank'ee!" said Bob, evidently much relieved.

"Nothing to thank for," said the judge, sullenly, as Bob went toward the door. "Nothing to thank for. But go now to the kitchen, and let them give you a good piece of roast beef and fixings—d'ye hear? He stopped and knocked upon the table. "A good piece of roast beef and fixings for Bob, directly," said he to the negress who entered, "and see that he eats it. And dress yourself more decently. Bob—d'ye hear? like a citizen, not like a wild red-skin!"

He nodded to the negress to retire, and then turning to Bob, went on:

"No excuse, Bob! we will send the rum to you. Eat and drink, man! like a reasonable creature, and meet your fate like a man, and not like a brainless fool. You don't want quackery—any hunger cures—to make you more crazy. I tell you I won't stir a step, if you don't eat and drink of the gifts which God has given for high and low, good and bad, and if you don't behave and dress yourself like a reasonable creature."

"Thank you," said Bob, humbly.

"I've already told you there is nothing to thank for," growled the judge.

Bob then left the room: the men remained sitting as calmly as ever. One after another got up, it is true, to fill his glass or to take his cigar—but a person entering would have had some difficulty in believing that here sat an ayuntamiento, on life and death. At first was heard a murmuring, from which one could perceive that they were not satisfied—especially the Alcalde—about proceeding so hastily, but by degrees he appeared also to give in.

Nearly an hour elapsed, however, before they had all brought forward their notions, and unfolded and laid them open, which they all did in the most calm, phlegmatic tone. Nor a word or syllable louder than common conversation was to be heard. One could have sworn they were discussing some lectureship or church appointment.

Even Johnny, who, according to their united opinion, must be a very dangerous fellow, did not make them lose their self-command. They agreed to lynch him (in backwoodsman's phrase), as coolly as if they were talking about catching a mustang. When they had at last come to this conclusion, they got up, went once more to the sideboard, drank to the judge's health and mine, shook our hands, and left the house.

During this prolonged sitting I had become so ill that it was with difficulty I could keep on my legs; the hard-heartedness, and yet again the tenderness, of those men, jarred my nerves. I could enjoy neither breakfast, nor dinner, nor supper.

The judge was also very much out of humor—although the ground of his ill-humor was, as you may easily imagine, very different from mine. His grievance was, that the jury had not accorded with his notion of keeping Bob for the common good, and had made so light of hanging him who might still have rendered such good service to the community.

That Johnny, the miserable, abject, cowardly, treacherous Johnny, should be put out of the world was perfectly right; but that Bob should be appeared to him absurd. It was in vain to remind him of the crime against the community, the laws of God and man—the finger of God and the avenging conscience.

Bob had sinned against the community and his Creator, and it was for these to demand satisfaction, and to determine it, not for him; to creep cowardly out of the world against which he had sinned, neither God nor man was served by that. Among the fourteen men had been two who had been banished from the States on account of murder—but they bore the burden like men, willing to repent it as men, to make up for it against the Mexicans.

We got rather cool toward each other; did not speak much more during the day, and separated early in the evening.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONDEMNED.

WE were sitting at breakfast the next morning, when a man very decently dressed in black rode up, dismounted, and was addressed by the judge as Bob Rock.

It was really Bob—but so metamorphosed that I could scarcely recognize him. Instead of the torn and blood-stained handkerchief which had latterly hung in rags about his head, he wore a hat; instead of the leather jacket, etc., respectable black cloth clothes.

He had shaved off his beard, and looked almost gentlemanly. With the clothes he had also put on another manner. He appeared calm and resolved; his manner was resigned, and even tranquil. With something of sadness in his look, he extended his hand to the judge—the latter seized it heartily, and held it in his own.

"Ah, Bob!" said he, "ah, Bob! If you had only heeded what has been so often told you. I had your clothes brought from New Orleans myself, to make a decent-looking man of you, at least on Sundays. How often have I asked you to put them on and go to meeting with us, to hear Mr. Bliss preach! It wasn't without reason, man! that I had the clothes made for you. There is a deal of truth in the proverb—'The dress makes the man.' A man puts on something like new ideas with a new dress. If you had put on those new ideas fifty-two times in the year, they would have made a wholesome breach between you and Johnny. Didn't I mean well by you, Bob?"

Bob said nothing.

"I got you just three times into them, and at this meeting; no more. Ah, Bob!"

Bob nodded silently.

"Well, well, Bob! I've done all that lay in my power to make you what a man should be; to reclaim you."

"That you have," said Bob, much affected; "God reward you for it."

I now conceived respect for the judge—I assure you—very great respect. I pressed his hand. A tear came into his eye, which he suppressed, and pointed to the breakfast. Bob thanked him respectfully, but said that he wished to remain fasting, and to appear fasting before his offended Creator and Judge.

"Our offended Creator and Judge," rejoined the Alcalde, seriously, "is not pleased by our rejecting the gifts which he has given his creatures, but in our reasonably enjoying them, Eat and drink, man! and follow, for once in your life, people who know what is better for you than yourself."

At last Bob took a chair. Before we had finished our breakfast, the first division of the jury arrived, dismounted, and entered. Nothing was to be seen on their countenances but the immovable Texan phlegm. They greeted each of us without changing a feature, and seated themselves at the table. Fresh glasses and plates were brought in, and they set to, and eat and drank with an appetite which appeared, at least, to have had four-and-twenty hours' sharpening.

While they were eating, the others came. There were the same greetings, the same mute welcome and invitation, the same appetite. During this meal, which lasted half an hour, I am certain that not a hundred words were spoken from all together, and these were mere formalities. At last, they were all satisfied, and the Alcalde commanded the negroes to clear the table, and then to leave the room.

This done, the Alcalde took the place at the upper end of the table, the jury on each side, and Bob facing them. I had naturally drawn back, as did also the two who had fled the States on account of murder. By degrees, their countenances assumed the less phlegmatic expression demanded by the solemnity of the occasion.

"Mr. Wythe," began the judge, "have you, as procurador, anything to bring before us?"

"Yes, Alcalde," rejoined the procurador, "I have to allege, that by virtue of my office, I went to the place intimated by Bob Rock, as he is called, and there found a dead man who had been murdered by a gunshot wound. I also found a money-belt, and several letters of recommendation to different planters."

"Have you found out who he is?"

"I have," rejoined the procurador. "I have ascertained from the documents and letters that the man was a citizen from Illinois, on his way to San Felipe, to purchase land of Colonel Austin, and settle there."

Having said this, the procurador produced from the saddle-bag, which hung by his side, a heavy money-belt, which he laid upon the table, with the letters. The letters were open—the belt sealed. The judge opened the belt and counted the money, which consisted of upward of five hundred dollars in gold and silver, and then the smaller sum, which was found in the purse

which Bob had taken for himself. The procurador then read the letters.

One of the corregidores then reported concerning Johnny, that he, as well as his mulatto, had disappeared. He, the corregidor, with his division, had followed their track, and as this separated he had divided also his men, but although they had ridden fifty, and even seventy miles, they had not been able to discover anything of them.

The judge seemed very much disconcerted by this intelligence.

"Bob Rock!" cried he, "step forward!"

Bob stepped forward.

"Bob Rock! or by whatever else you may be known, do you acknowledge yourself guilty of having shot the man on whom these letters and monies have been found?"

"Guilty!" replied Bob, in a low tone.

"Gentlemen of the jury!" spoke the judge again, "would you like to retire to consider your verdict?"

The twelve men rose and left the parlor; only the judge, I, Bob, and the two fugitives, remained behind. In about ten minutes they returned with uncovered heads. The judge likewise took off his cap.

The foreman said, "Guilty."

"Bob Rock," said the judge, now addressing him, with a solemn voice, "your fellow-citizens have found you guilty, and I pronounce the sentence—that you be hanged by the neck until you are dead. The Lord be merciful to your soul!"

"Amen!" said all present.

"Thank you," murmured Bob.

"We will first seal the effects belonging to the murdered man, before we fulfill our painful duty," said the judge.

He called the negress, and commanded her to bring a light, sealed the girdle and papers first, and then the procurador, and lastly the corregidores, did the same.

"Has any one anything to say why the sentence should not be carried into effect?" said the judge, with a keen glance at me.

"He has saved my life, judge, and fellow-citizens," said I, deeply affected.

Bob's eyes, while I so spake, became fixed; he fetched a deep sigh, but at the same time shook his head.

"In God's name, let us go, then!" said the judge.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXECUTION OF BOB ROCK.

WITHOUT saying another word we left the house, and mounted our horses. The judge had brought a Bible with him, out of which he read to Bob as they rode along, in order to prepare him for eternity. Bob listened attentively for a while, but at last he appeared to get impatient again; he set off at a quicker pace, and soon broke into so fast a trot, that we began to suspect that he was trying to escape us. It was, however, nothing but the fear that the fever would overtake him before his end.

In about an hour we had the patriarch, as it was called, before us.

And, truly, it was a patriarch, a real patriarch of the vegetable kingdom. In the solemn frame of mind, the seriousness of death which now penetrated us, we all stopped at the sight as before an apparition from a higher, a celestial world. To me it was as though the spirits of an invisible world spoke out of this colossal wonder of nature, which was so altogether unlike a tree.

A monstrous mass of vegetation, which, many hundred feet in diameter, stretched up at least a hundred and thirty feet, but so rose up that one could see neither trunk, nor branch, nor bough, not even leaves, but only millions of whity-green scales, with numberless silver beards, shorter at the top and longer below, glittered in such singular fantastic shapes, that, at first sight, you would have believed that hundreds, yes, thousands of patriarchs, looked at you out of their niches.

Lower down, the beard—the well-known Spanish, but here not dirty, but silver-gray moss, hung as much as forty feet down, hiding the trunk so entirely, that several men were obliged to dismount and tear asunder the moss to give us entrance.

Arrived inside the enormous dome, it took us still some time before we, obscured as we were at first in the darkness, were able to observe the interior. The rays of the sun broken and reflected by silvery moss, and scales, and leaves, penetrated green, and red, and yellow and blue, as through the stained glass windows of a cathedral, and diffused exactly the same dim twilight.

Moreover the trunk was, in itself, a peculiar wonder of nature. Rising at least forty feet before it diverged into branches, it had so many enormous excrescences and knots, that it exactly resembled an irregular rock or cone, with prongs diverging in every direction, from which were first suspended the masses of silver moss, and beards and strings and branches.

So overpowered did I feel at this gigantic work of creation, that I stood for several minutes staring at it in astonishment, and it was only through the indistinct murmurings of my companions that I was brought to consciousness.

We stopped in a circle within the dome of the tree, Bob in the middle. He stood trembling like an aspen leaf, his eyes fixed staringly on a fresh mound of earth, which was visible about thirty feet from the trunk. Underneath lay the murdered man. But a glorious burying-place. No poet could have dreamed or desired one more beautiful. The softest turf, the most sublime sepulcher, with an eternal twilight wonderfully interwoven with rainbow rays.

Bob, the judge, and his official colleagues, had remained sitting on their horses, but about half the men had dismounted. One of the latter now cut the lasso from Bob's saddle, threw the one end over a low branch, and, fastening the other to it with a noose, let it dangle from the bough. This simple preparation completed, the judge took off his hat, and folded his hands: the others followed his example.

"Bob!" said he to the poor fellow, whose head was now bowed down over the neck of his mustang. "Bob! we will pray for your poor soul, which must now separate from your sinful body!"

Bob did not hear him.

"Bob!" said the judge again.

Bob raised his head. "I wanted to say something," said he, in a wandering tone.

"What have you to say?"

Bob stared about him, his lips moved convulsively, but the spirit was evidently no longer with the things of this earth.

"Bob!" said the judge, again, "we will pray for your poor soul!"

"Pray! pray!" groaned he; "I shall need it."

The judge slowly and fervently, and in a voice which trembled with emotion, uttered the Lord's Prayer. Bob repeated each word after him. At the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses!" his voice broke into a deep sigh. When it was ended, the judge exclaimed, "God have mercy upon his soul!"

"Amen," repeated all present.

One of the men now passed the lasso round his neck; another bound his eyes: a third person drew his feet from the stirrups, while a fourth, raising a whip, stepped behind his mustang. All this was done in solemn silence. The whip fell, the animal made a spring forward. At the same instant, Bob clutched desperately at the bridle, and uttered a shrill "Halt!"

It was too late; he hung already.

The passionate, desperate "halt!" shrieked out by the judge still sounds in my ears; I see him still, as, nearly riding over the man who held the whip, he pushed frantically to the side of the hanging man, caught him in his arms, and raised him on his horse. Holding the suspended man in one hand, and occupied in opening the noose with the other, the whole gigantic frame of

the man trembled with indescribable anxiety. There was something terrific in this scene. The procurador, the corregidores, all stood as if transfixed.

"Whisky! whisky! has no one any whisky?" he shouted.

One of the men sprang forward with a whisky-flask; another supported the body; and a third his feet, while the judge poured some drops into his mouth at the same time gazing at him as though his own life deepened upon his reviving. For a long time all their trouble was in vain, but the cravat, which they had forgotten to take off, had prevented the breaking of the neck. At length he opened his distorted eyes.

"Bob!" cried the judge, in a hollow voice.

Bob stared at him.

"Bob!" said the judge again, "you wanted to say something, did you not, of Johnny?"

"Johnny!" gasped Bob—"Johnny!"

"What of Johnny?"

"He's gone to San Antonio, to——"

"To San Antonio?" exclaimed the judge. His powerful breast heaved as if it would burst; his features became fixed.

"To San Antonio—to Father Jose!" gasped Bob again. "A Catholic—be on your guard."

"A traitor, then!" murmured all, as though benumbed.

"A Catholic!" exclaimed the judge.

The words seemed to deprive him of all strength, the suspended man sunk from his arm, and hung again on the lasso. An instant he stared at him—at the men.

"Catholic!—traitor!"

"Catholic!—a citizen!—and a traitor!" they murmured after him.

"So it is, men! But we've no time to lose," he whispered, in the same unearthly tone, and staring at them, "no time to lose; we must catch him."

"No time to lose—we must catch him!" repeated all.

"We must immediately go to San Antonio," cried the judge.

"To San Antonio!" they all repeated, like echoes, at the same time moving and riding to the opening made in the moss. Arrived at the outside they looked once more inquiringly at the judge and at each other, then those who had dismounted swung themselves into their saddles, and all galloped away in the direction of San Antonio.

CHAPTER XIX.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE REVOLUTION.

THE judge alone remained behind, in deep thought; he was deadly pale, and his features were like ice, his eyes fixed on the men riding away. Suddenly he appeared to awaken from his reverie, and caught hold of my arm.

"Hasten to my house; lose no time; don't spare horseflesh. There, take Ptoly, and a fresh horse—ride quickly to San Felipe—tell Stephen Austin what has happened, what you have seen and heard."

"But, judge."

"Hasten, at once, if you wish to serve Texas. Bring my wife and daughter back."

So saying, he impelled me away with his hands, his feet, his whole body; in his impatience, his features assumed an expression so fearful, that, quite beside myself, I gave spurs to my mustang. It flew away. I turned round at the corner of the wood to look, but the judge had disappeared.

I rode as fast as my horse could, galloped—reached the house—took Ptoly—a fresh horse—galloped to San Felipe, and announced myself to Colonel Austin. Stephen Austin listened to me; became pale—commanded to saddle horses, and sent to his neighbors. Before I started with the wife and the step-daughter of the Alcalde for their house, he had set off with fifty armed men, in the direction of San Antonio. I

returned with the two ladies committed to my charge, to their plantation; but had scarcely arrived, when I sank down in a swoon.

Wild fantasies, a severe, burning fever, seized me, and brought me to the brink of the grave. Many days did I thus hover between life and death; but at last my youthful nature got the victory.

I arose; but although I received the most careful and friendly attention, the dreadful images would not leave me; they stood ever and everywhere before me. It was only when I mounted my mustang, in order to return with Antony (Mr. Neal's huntsman, who had at last found me) toward the plantation of the latter, that more cheerful images began to arise.

Our way home led by the patriarch. Numberless birds of prey buzzed around it. I turned my eyes away, and stopped my ears, but all in vain; an invisible power attracted me toward it. Antony had already penetrated through the opening in the moss. Presently a wild cry of exultation sounded from the interior. In indescribable haste I dismounted, drew my mustang through the opening, and hurried toward the gigantic trunk. A corpse hung about forty feet from it, by a lasso, from the bough; the same bough on which Bob had hung; but it was not Bob. The corpse was much too short for him. I drew nearer, and looked.

"That was a caitiff such as the world could not produce two of!" said Antony, pointing to the corpse.

"Johnny!" cried I, shuddering; "that is Johnny!"

"It was; but, thank Heaven! there is an end of him," said Antony.

I shuddered. "But where is Bob?"

"Bob?" cried Antony—"Bob?"

"Yes, Bob!" I looked; there was still the grave mound, as I had seen it last. It appeared higher and larger; and yet, again, not so. Did the murderer lie underneath, with his victim?

"Shall we not render the poor wretch the last services, Antony?" I said.

"The caitiff!" rejoined he. "I won't poison my hands with him; the carrion birds may have him."

"Let us go," said I, and we rode on.

When we arrived at Mr. Neal's, I found him already informed of the dreadful occurrences, and making preparation for the approaching struggle, as also his neighbors. Eight weeks later, this broke out, although, at first, only dictated against the military authorities, who, in consequence of instructions from higher quarters, began to permit severe oppression toward the colonists.

The seizure of the forts of Velasco and Nacogdoches, whose garrisons, with Lieutenant-Colonel Ugartechia and Colonel Piedras, were taken prisoners, were the results of this fight.

Nevertheless, a peace was concluded by Colonel F. Stephen Austin on the Texan, and Colonel Mexia on the Mexican side, between our citizens, at whose head stood our Alcalde, and the military authorities. But in the year 1833 followed the imprisonment of Stephen F. Austin, our Texan representative in the Mexican Congress, by the vice-president Gomez Farias, and thereupon the revolt of Santa Anna to the priests' party.

To this, the declaration of Texas for the constitution of 1824, and to this the separation from Cohahuila, as well as from Mexico; the declaration of independence; in one word, the revolution itself, is to be attributed.

Where so many materials are heaped up for a general conflagration, as was the case in Texas, it needs, only a spark to set it on fire. This spark fell, and it lighted."

CHAPTER XX.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

THE independence, or what is the same thing, the sovereignty, of the country pro-

claimed, our first care must naturally be to secure alliances at home and abroad, and to get the sea-ports into our hands.

General Cos had occupied the port of Galveston (from Metamora) with the military, and had there raised a blockade, nominally to give effect to the customs' laws, but in reality to cut off from us the communication with New Orleans and the north. This communication had to be restored, and that as secretly as possible.

My friend and I received the commission to do this. Our whole equipment consisted in the sealed dispatches which we were to open in Columbia, and a leader the half-blood trapper Agostino.

Arrived in Columbia, we assembled the most important of the inhabitants, as also those of Marion and Bolivar, unsealed the dispatches, and six hours later the little troop therein ordered were assembled, and we proceeded with them the same day toward Galveston; the following day arrived before the blockhouse; surprised it, and took the Mexicans prisoners without losing a man.

We had not yet finished our conquest, when, on the ninth day, our half-blood Agostino returned. We had sent him to the government at San Felipe with the account of the taking of the fort. He brought us new instructions. According to these we were to hand over the blockhouse to a brave commander, and then without delay to go up the Trinity river, and from thence to advance toward San Antonio de Bexar with as much force as we could raise.

The same messenger brought us also assurance of the perfect satisfaction of the congress, which showed upon this, as upon many other occasions, that it understood the art of governing, of rewarding, and of spurring on, as well as the oldest parliament or statesman.

Upon the motion of our friend, the Alcalde, we two received for a reward a hacienda* each of land at Trinity river, and so to our commission was at the same time delicately united the advantage of bringing us near to our new possessions.

Without delay we let the little garrison of the fort choose their officer, invested him with the command, and hastened across the Liberty, to Trinity river. Arrived there we found everything in the greatest excitement, the young people from Anahuac already assembled there, and on the point of setting out for San Antonio de Bexar. The same at Liberty.

In both of these little towns, the troops, about forty men, had chosen their officer themselves, and had proceeded bravely and hopefully toward the distant meeting place.

There were at Trinity river at that time no important settlements, but only scattered plantations, at one of which we arrived late in the evening. As yet, the excitement had not reached so far as this, but on the same evening that we arrived it circulated amongst the neighbors for forty miles round.

Already on the following morning, mustangs for riding and loading were crowded before the plantation. On one of these the owner packed his provisions, the other he mounted himself; his rifle, with the well-filled powder-horn, shot-bag, and bowie-knife, slung round his shoulder. Thus armed, we set out in the evening with forty-three men.

We had a pretty long march before us. San Antonio de Bexar, the chief town of the country, lies a good two hundred and sixty miles southwest-by-west from Trinity river, through prairies without path or road; over rivers and streams which, though neither Mississippi nor Potomacs, are nevertheless deep and wide enough to delay armies for many days.

But to our farmers and settlers, accustomed to overcome obstacles of all kinds, these pathless prairies and bridgeless streams

* Five sittros, or square miles of land, is the greatest area which (according to the Mexican law of the 4th of January, which was also received in Texas) can be comprised in a single estate.

were mere trifles. When they could not ride, they swam through.

Even we, who, brought up in the academies and universities, had grown up in comparative luxury, and in the States should doubtless at much less important rivers have sought for bridges and ferries; did not here feel the want of them.

In fact, you would scarcely believe how easily even the man who has been well and carefully brought up, when placed in natural circumstances, particularly in an excited mood, can dispense with, and forget the comforts and necessities which, from having been accustomed to them from his earliest youth, had become natural with him.

A few years earlier, and eight days spent without shelter, without sustenance, in the open air and often in rain, would most certainly have laid us both upon a sick bed, perhaps have brought on a chronic disease. Here each day brought us fresh wants, but also fresh strength and more cheerful spirits.

And yet we slept night by night under the open sky, on damp earth, once in the heaviest rain; several times wet through to the skin, with no other nourishment than panolas* mixed with sugar, which at first tasted rather sickly, but soon relished very well.

They are the common nourishment on a long journey in Texas, Cohahuila, Santa Fe, and have in forced marches this great advantage, they can be easily packed, and yet do not easily spoil, and keep a man not only well and strong, but also in a cheerful and in some degree in a "sugared" humor. I had many opportunities during our marches backward and forward, of observing these "sugared" moods of our people, when they had nothing but panolas; as also their eager, greedy, selfish, and odious mood when they tasted animal nourishment.

The same men were quite different when they sat around the meat pot and rum bottle, than when fasting they drew their panolas from the saddle-bag. In the one case there was an eager, fierce hunger, which, if it did not break out, was yet to be seen in the disgustingly animal expression of the countenance; in the other case a composedness, a mildness, and urbanity which commonly surprised the authorities our many-headed sovereign had modestly appointed over himself.

This enigma solves itself when we consider that even the rudest, the most ravenous, restrains himself where nothing promises to satisfy his animal craving,—even the most selfish will be generous, when there is no more opportunity for indulging his egotism.

Well, on this march we had nothing but panolas. Many had not even given themselves time to wait for these, and had filled their saddle-bags with baked Indian corn alone. Nevertheless, as we all sat down to the same *table d'hôte*, we all had panolas as long as the panolas lasted; took with them a few draughts from the rum bottle, as long as it contained anything, and when rum and panolas were exhausted, set to work on the roasted corn, which we washed down with a draught of fresh water.

No one thought of more, for no one saw more, and that kept us in health, and above all—contented, cheerful, and strong.

It was our first campaign; our excitement therefore is quite intelligible. It prevailed everywhere—through all the land.

On all sides divisions of armed men passed us, but—quite American, that—not one of the ten or more little troops that we met joined itself to the other; either their horses were fresher than those of their brethren in arms, and then they trotted before—or more fatigued, and then they fell back, after a short greeting and a cheerful shake of the hand.

So three-and-forty men we set out from Trinity river, and three-and-forty men we arrived at the Salado river, the place of meeting of our troops.

From thence we had still about fifteen

* Indian cakes.

miles to the chief town against which our first great blow was to be struck. But this chief town, as at the present time, was protected by a strong fort, provided with a garrison of nearly 3,000 men; a body of troops considerably larger than the collected, disposable military power of Texas; and with this also sufficient heavy artillery, which was commanded entirely by experienced and even celebrated officers of the Revolution.

At any rate, we prepared ourselves for a hard struggle—for the whole army which found itself at the Salado, under the command of General Austin, did not exceed 800 men!

On the same day in which we entered the principal quarter with our three-and forty volunteers, a council of war was held, in which it was decided to advance toward the Mission of San Espado.

The *avant garde* was immediately to set out for it; the command of this was given to my friend and myself, but in order to moderate our youthful ardor, Mr. Wharton, a considerable planter, who had brought with him a good number of his neighbors, was joined with us.

We partook, with our comrades, of a hasty meal, chose from 800 volunteers—who all wished to come with us—ninety-two, and then set out with good courage toward the place of destination.

Our way led through an open prairie, here and there shaded with tree islands, which, however, already gave notice of the vicinity of the chief town, for several settlements lay around.

Arrived at the Espado Mission, a warm debate arose in our triple-headed council of war. The order communicated to us spoke strongly of surrounding the posts, and awaiting the arrival of the Commander-in-chief. It was also the most prudent thing we could do; the mission was very strong, surrounded by a high wall, could with little exertion be defended against an opposing enemy, and afforded perfect security against any hostile attack. To Fanning, however, the banks of the Salado were very precious. They had been the witnesses of his happiest hours. On them his young and beautiful life had unfolded to bloom. He had there given himself up to the first transports of successful love.

On an excursion from San Antonio, he had seen his Elvira for the first time on its banks. The happy unhappy one! Eight weeks later he had led the lovely one home as his bride. The honeymoon had not passed, when the war-call had torn him from the side of his sweet bride. Very naturally, it now drew him toward these love-breathing banks with an irresistible impulse.

I gave in, though unwillingly, to the entreaty of my friend, but Mr. Wharton, who knew nothing of the circumstances, shook his head not a little, yet, out-voted, he was at last obliged to consent.

We left our horses and mustangs with a garrison of eight men in the mission, and then advanced toward the river.

This flowed down from north to south a quarter of a mile to the west of the mission; between them lay a little tree island; all the rest was open prairie, which extended to the brink (overgrown with a thick mantle of vines) and descended rather steeply about eight or ten feet to the margin of the water. The Salado forms at this point a strong arch-like curve. At each end of the bow is a fort, through which alone the river can be passed, as the water, although not wide, is nevertheless rather impetuous and deep.

If therefore we took our position within this bow, it could not be very difficult to defend both the forts, which lay about a quarter of a mile distant from each other, as the enemy could not easily get at us from the opposite bank—which was thickly wooded and considerably higher.

Still, the danger of our situation did not escape us. It offered no *point d'appui*; we could be surrounded, attacked, hemmed in, and captured at once in the front, and also from behind, from the opposite bank, with-

out the possibility of escaping, if the enemy—which would doubtless approach with a superior force—should only partially do its duty. But this *if*—we knew would fail.

We had already been engaged several times with this enemy, and had each time overcome him with little difficulty. It is true, our successes were as yet only gained against the block-houses of Velasco, Nacogdoches, and Galveston, whose garrisons were neither numerous nor experienced in war; but then, we were at that time anything but skilled in arms, and believed ourselves to be much more so now.

At the same time, we were young, full of courage, self-confidence, felt ourselves equal to a thousand Mexicans, and only wished that they might come before those at headquarters arrived. We were dreadfully afraid these would come too soon, and so take from us our laurels.

We therefore resolved to stay, examined the terrain and bank, garrisoned them with twelve men, placed twelve others at the two forts, and then encamped with the rest, full of courage, in the fragrant vine grottoes, which however, unfortunately for us, had no grapes.

After we had finished all these preparations we were hungry. We had brought no provisions with us—for the simple reason that there was nothing to bring; each of the 800 men had as yet been pretty nearly his own general, quartermaster, and commissary.

Real novices in the noble art of war, the different parties of our expedition, who had also arrived from very distant parts of the country, were unprovided with indispensable necessities, and therefore some bushels of maize, potatoes, and a few cattle, were nearly all that was to be met with at headquarters.

Neither had we been able to meet with anything in either of the missions—so, come from whence it might, something must be procured to eat.

Accordingly, we decided at once to send out foragers, and ordered out twelve men for that purpose, who at once started off. After about an hour's absence, they came galloping back merrily with their sheep.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ATTACK.

THE evening—the night passed without a single enemy having shown himself. The morning broke, and still no Mexican. Nevertheless, we suspected the deceitful security; let the men take their morning meal, and had just finished it, when the *picket*, who was stationed at the upper fort, came with the news that a strong division of cavalry was drawing near, their vanguard already in the narrow pass which led to the fort.

A few minutes later we heard the shrill sounds of their trumpets, and immediately upon it we saw also the officers spring up the bank and into the prairie, their *escadrons* after them, of which we counted six.

They were the Duranger dragoons, very well clothed, excellently mounted, and perfectly armed with carbines and swords. Their number must have amounted to nearly three hundred. Probably they had reconnoitered, and so found out our position, though not our strength, as we, suspecting something of the sort, had put our people pretty well in movement, and suffered them to spring into the prairie, and disappear again.

So far all was well done; but, on the other hand, we had committed a heavy offense against all military rule, in not having placed a picket on the opposite bank, who could have informed us of the approach of the enemy and the direction which he took.

Without doubt thirty or forty good shots, and all our men were this, would not only

have obstructed the enemy, but, most probably, have quite prevented his going over.

The pass which led down from the opposite bank to the fort, was narrow, rather steep, the bank at least six times higher than this side, and perfectly within the reach of our guns, so that horse and man could have been aimed at, and shot down in pairs, as they wound out of the pass.

All this became clear to us now, as the dragoons sprang into the prairie; but the fault was committed, and we had to console ourselves with the thought that the enemy would be sure not to attribute our mistake to the real cause, our inexperience in military practice, but to our excessive courage.

At all events, we determined to support the good opinion they entertained of us, and to give them a warm reception.

Riding up in the prairie, the enemy had advanced a considerable distance in a westerly direction, had then turned toward the south, and then, wheeling about, had showed front to us, at a distance of about five hundred steps. In this position it took in just the curve of the bow which the Salado occupied by us forms at this place.

Scarcely had the enemy arranged themselves than they opened fire, although we were quite invisible to them, standing in the vaulting of the river bank, and perfectly protected, not only against carbines, but case and cannon balls, which, at the most, would fly over our heads.

After the first fire they sprang about a hundred steps in a gallop toward us, stopped then to load, shot off, and then sprang again a hundred steps forward, stopped again, loaded, shot off, sprang again onward, and repeated this singular challenge until they stood about a hundred and fifty paces before us.

Then, however, they appeared to wish to deliberate. We kept quite quiet.

The dragoons clearly had not much confidence; at any rate, their warlike ardor seemed to have disappeared, although the officers did all in their power to re-kindle it; but at last they brought the two *escadrons* forward, and the others slowly followed them.

We had waited for this. Six of our people were ordered to spring up to aim at the officers, and when they had discharged, to shelter themselves behind the bank.

With extraordinary sang-froid did our six brave riflemen carry out this dangerous maneuver in the face of the enraged enemy, at a distance of scarcely fifty feet; they sprang up calmly, took aim, discharged, and then sprang back.

As we expected, their small number brought the enemy within the wished-for distance. They stopped at first, especially when three or four officers fell, but scarcely were our men down when the *escadrons* galloped madly after them.

But now Fanning sprang forward, with thirty of our people, presented their rifles, aimed, and discharging one after another, brought one dragoon after another from his horse, always taking the foremost, as we had told them.

Wharton and I, with a reserve of six-and-thirty men, sprang up, just after Fanning had discharged, and had scarcely come to ten shots, when the dragoons, as if on the word of command, wavered, turned themselves to the right, and all took to their heels.

Our rifles had worked too roughly! Like sheep got amongst wolves, they broke out on every side. In vain the officers tried to detain the fugitives. Entreaties, menaces, even drawn swords and blows, were not able to bring them to a halt, since, to confess the truth, this halting was generally fatal, for our keen marksmen were mostly sure of a squirrel at the distance of a hundred steps; how much more, then, of a Durango dragoon?

We had, however, let our men fire slowly, and, after each discharge, jump over the bank, in order to reload as quickly as possible, so that, of our little troop, there were

always from thirty to forty standing ready, in case the enemy should make an attempt *en masse* at us.

The first greeting had, however, deprived them of all such desire for the present; for some time it seemed doubtful whether they would venture upon a second attack, although the officers gave themselves all possible trouble to get their men to advance; entreaties, menaces, and scoldings, were, for a long time, in vain.

Seen from a distance, their gesticulations, the frightful blows which they dealt, the capers of their fiery steeds, all this was droll enough, a real theater scene; but yet, to confess the truth, I must declare again that the officers showed more courage and decision than I had expected from them. They alone had not been spared by the rifles, and of their two escadrons nearly all had fallen, and the few that still remained, very far from being discouraged, only endeavored all the more to bring their men to advance.

At length it seemed as though they would succeed. The manner in which they accomplished this was curious, and peculiarly Mexican.

Posted at the head of their escadrons, they kept riding a hundred steps backward and forward, thus, in a certain measure, showing their people that there was no imminent danger.

Every such gallop had involuntarily brought the dragoons some twenty or thirty feet in advance, when they halted, as if at the word of command, and looked carefully round on all sides, whether any of the dreaded guns were to be seen; then the officers again galloped forward, and the dragoons came again behind them; and thus they galloped and advanced, certainly ten times, halted, looked about, advanced again, until they had again got within a hundred steps of us.

At each of these advances they discharged their carbines. So, by degrees, getting accustomed to the smoke and our neighborhood, three of the escadrons, that had not yet been under fire, began to form columns for attack, and then sprang about fifty steps forward.

Suddenly the collected officers thundered out the command *forward!* put their horses in gallop, and then, following the powerful impulse, all three escadrons broke in full speed toward us.

This time, instead of six, we let thirty of our men spring up with express orders to fire slowly, and not to lose a shot. The sight of the approaching enemy, however, deprived the greater number of their presence of mind. They hastily fired into the mass, and then sprang down again. This haste very nearly brought us into a dilemma.

The enemy wavered, it is true, but did not retreat. In this critical moment Wharton and I came forward with the reserve.

"Aim and shoot slowly and surely, take man for man," we both cried, Wharton right and I left.

We ourselves reserved our fire. This was at last effective. Shot followed shot, and always hit the foremost.

I once more cautioned them to fire slowly, in order to give Fanning's men time for loading. Before we had all discharged Fanning was again at our side, with a dozen of his most skillful men.

For full three minutes the enemy, as though stupefied, endured our deadly fire; but since, as I always said, we took the foremost dragoon, and the one springing forward also fell, at last not one would advance, and the escadrons got into disorder, which soon changed to a wild retreat. We gave them an unpleasant souvenir on the way, which sent many a horse riderless into the prairie; then reloaded our rifles and retired to our vine harbors and grottoes, to await what should transpire further.

CHAPTER XXII.

AGAINST ODDS.

By this time, however, the enemy had lost all desire for making another attack. It is true, they ventured to within about three hundred steps of us, but the appearance of a dozen or so of our people was quite sufficient to make them seek refuge at a distance.

Nevertheless, at the distance of three or four hundred yards, they fired their carbines at us, which they could the more dare to do, since we did not return their fire with a single shot. The fight must have lasted about half or three-quarters of an hour.

On our side not one man had fallen, not one was even wounded, although during the attack we had sustained a very shower of bullets.

We could not explain this singular phenomenon; the bullets fell right and left, and many struck, but they scarcely scratched the flesh, and left only a slight mark. We were just on the way to consider ourselves invulnerable, and the battle as already decided, when the second picket, stationed at the lower fort, came running with the rather alarming intelligence, that considerable bodies of infantry were approaching toward the fort, and would be visible in a few minutes.

And truly, in the same instant, we heard the sound of the trumpets, and in the next, the first column defiled up the bank of the river into the prairie, toward the musqueet island.

As company on company spread themselves on the plain, we could easily measure their strength.

It was two battalions of about a thousand bayonets.

They had also a field-piece with them.

This was certainly more than enough for seventy-two, or, including us three officers, seventy-five men, for, as I said, we had left twenty men in the mission and the musqueet island, so that, in fact, they were twenty Mexicans to one American. No joke! when you consider that the enemy was perfectly well armed, and consisted of two battalions of line infantry, and six squadrons of dragoons, the last, it is true, lightened of at least fifty, but still, with the fresh re-enforcements, not less dangerous than before.

It is true, all our men were excellent sharpshooters, and besides their rifles most of them had pistols also in their girdles; but what were seventy-five rifles and a hundred pistols against a thousand muskets and bayonets, two hundred and fifty dragoons, and a field-piece loaded with canister.

If the enemy had any idea of military science, and acted decisively, we should be taken like foxes in a trap. But then we were more than half certain this military skill and decisive action would be wanting. We pretty well knew our adversaries, or else we should not have ventured so far. All that was now necessary was prompt decision, unshakable cold-bloodedness, which, not deceived by anything, would not allow an enemy time for breathing.

Fanning and I, in the meantime, were not very light-hearted. With our sensibility and sympathy we had led the men into this defenseless prairie, and at the same time to slaughter, and that in such an inconsiderate and rash manner, that it was with some degree of anxiety that we looked first at each other, and then at the men. But as we looked at them courage and confidence again rose within us! On no occasion did I perceive the swaggering, British bull-dog courage, but always the constant, composed, decided, calm, unshaken and unshakable courage of the American.

Now I can understand how it was that the British, even when they were at first successful in their battles, were at last beaten at every point, and overcome both by sea and land.

As regards these Mexicans, I firmly believe that if the whole Mexican army had

marched out, our men would have aimed their rifles just as coolly and cheerfully. The only thing to be heard was, "Don't spare your powder and lead, don't waste, don't lose a shot."

Now with such men it is a pleasure to fight, and, if necessary, to die, for one fights and dies with honor. But as we would rather not do the last, we were obliged to be prompt. And promptly did we decide upon our measures.

Fanning and Wharton were to engage the dragoons and infantry, to me fell the charge of taking the cannon, an eight-pounder.

The artillery was planted outside of the left wing, where the prairie sinks steep to the river, which in its entire curve, it completely commanded. This bank was, as I have said, pretty thickly covered with vine branches, which, however, scarcely hid us from the enemy, for the very first shot proved to us that we dared not reckon too much upon this ambush.

There was not a moment to be lost, for one single well-directed shot, and the combat was as good as ended. A dozen men jumped up together, I worked as fast as I could through the entanglement of the vines, and was already about fifty steps from the cannon, when the second shot went off close to us. The movement of the tendrils had betrayed us to the enemy.

We did not dare press forward on this road, so I motioned to those next the prairie to spring up, and first of all to shoot the artillerymen; I myself followed.

As I sprang up and raised the rifle to fire, it fell from me as though a hundred weight was at the mouth; an invisible power held it down. Not three steps before me stood a tall, haggard figure, in a leather cap, waistcoat, and moccasins, with strange and wild features, and a beard many inches long.

How the man had got there was a riddle as well to my men as to me, and they looked not a little shy at him. But he must already have fired, for one of the artillerymen lay stretched near the cannon; a second, who carried the ramrod, he shot down, and then reloaded in a manner as calm and business-like, as if he had carried on this kind of exercise all his life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE APPARITION.

As you may easily imagine, on the field of battle one is not very choise; the most agreeable neighbor is always he who puts down the greatest number of enemies, who carries on the slaughter with the greatest success.

The rude, bloody work in which one is engaged overpowers, for the time, every humane feeling, but still the whole manner of this man had a something so murderous in it, and betrayed, I may say, such profligate disregard of his own and other men's lives, that, singular as it may sound, I stared at him, and shuddered.

And not I only, but my men also were struck with his ghostlike mien. For twenty seconds had they been standing on the prairie bank, but still they held their rifles as though stupefied. Instead of fixing their eyes upon the enemy, their eyes kept turning upon him, until he called out to them, with a rough voice, "D—n your eyes! you staring fools, don't you see them artillery men? why don't you knock them on the head?"

It was not till then that they fired, missed, and then sprang, as if impelled, hastily down the prairie bank. I was not able either to follow them, or to raise my rifle, and if the enemy, instead of seventy steps, had been only seven from me, I should not have been able!

The man's voice had gone through me so dreadfully, I stood, with my eyes raised to the specter, just as if the grave of a person I had murdered had opened itself, and the victim of my bloody

deed had raised himself from it, and approached me with his gaping wounds. My blood was half frozen. Still I did not know who it was. It is true, his features swam dimly before my mind, but yet I did not recognize them. I had seen them somewhere, and had heard his voice, and under circumstances which then, as now, had curdled the blood in my veins.

I was clearly conscious of having felt before the same shudder which I now experienced, and without doubt, I had felt it in his presence; yes, it had been he who had frozen my heart's blood, and shaken my innermost nerve, but where and when I could not remember.

The enemy's balls fell like hailstones about me. I stood as petrified, until, at last, one of my people sprang up, and, taking me by the arm, pulled me down the prairie bank. It was not till then that, freed from this dreadful neighbor, I came to myself, but I could not resist casting back apprehensive glances upon the apparition, and, singular to say, at every look something like a desire to see the man fall passed through my mind.

While we were still standing on the prairie, the artillery men had directed their piece toward us, but before they were able to fire we were already under the bank, and he shot the third down.

To rid themselves of their frightful antagonist, the surviving ones now fired upon him alone, but neither canister nor musket balls, sent by the enemy at a distance of less than fifty paces, had any power over him. With iron steadfastness he continued loading; shot the fourth, and then the last, and cried to us, in a rough tone, "D—n you for lagging fellows, why don't you take that big gun?"

For the whole world, we could, none of us, have sprung up. We had all loaded, but stood like pillars of salt, staring at him and each other, at the same time wondering whether the singular apparition was really, like ourselves, an inhabitant of earth and not, rather, a prairie, with those weather-beaten features; that beard, many inches long which hung about his neck like tufts of Spanish moss, the target for a hundred hostile balls, he resembled so entirely one of the numberless hobgoblins with which the Catholic superstition of the Spaniards has so richly endowed this very prairie, that up to this present hour whenever I bring him fully before my mind's eye, involuntary doubts arise as to whether he was not really a specter. In truth, he resembled an inhabitant of this earth much less than a wild prairie spirit, and, like one, he had delivered us from a bad scrape.

Our small number, the shots which had failed through our astonishment, above all, the visible fear with which we had taken our flight down the prairie bank, had so encouraged the enemy, that they caused a company to advance in double step, and fired upon our hiding-place with an impetuous fire.

Already a troop advanced to cut us (who still stood as lame) off, when, it was high time, Fanning appeared with thirty of our riflemen.

This sight restored us to our senses. A joyful hurrah, and then my men were up on the bank, without joining themselves to Fanning.

Whether it was a feeling of shame or of reviving courage, I know not, but they advanced with rapid strides to within twenty steps of the enemy, attacked them, and shot a dozen of the infantry, with such, I might say, desperate calmness, that the company staggered for an instant, and then, in the greatest fright, threw away their muskets, and yelling "diablos! diablos!" took to their heels.

Spite of the critical moment, Fanning had, with admirable equanimity, caused his men to fire very slowly, so that when we returned from our attack there were still about half a dozen who had not shot; and of Wharton's reserve, which had advanced at the same time, not one.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE VICTORY.

THE company had entirely given way, and now ran, at least, a hundred steps from us; but, instead of them, the eight-pounder, which, meanwhile, had been fresh loaded, reappeared, and was just pointed toward us for discharging. If it had been manned by artillery men, they would, in all probability, have greeted us in a manner that would soon have put an end to the fight; but, as they were infantry, they were not, from awkwardness, ready to fire until again the half of them were shot down, and we had sprung down the prairie bank.

The shot having been fired off, we sprang up again. It was a real war dance, by which we began, by degrees, to get warm. Not a minute had elapsed between our descent and ascent, but that short space of time had brought before us the scattered company, both those at hand and those stretched out in the prairie.

We now saw that the 2d battalion, laid out *en echelon*, was also advancing toward us, and that it had taken its position so that the hinder columns sustained the front ones, and we should perhaps have to fall upon a dozen companies, one after the other, a matter which then appeared important.

Not that we were in the least afraid of not closing just as easily with each advancing company; but it was, and not without ground, to be feared that if the fight was of long duration, the enemy would, by degrees, get over the panic which our rifles created in them, take courage, and, giving up the useless, raking firing, come to the attack with their bayonets.

We further remarked, not without uneasiness, that the cavalry, which, until now, had kept at a safe distance, also began to move and press toward the Musqueet island, and that the outer wing of the infantry had already approached within shot of them, in order to give them a hand, and to advance with them toward us.

But where were our twelve men whom we had left on the island? What had become of them? Were they still there, or had they, from dread of such a superior force, retired to the mission? That would have been a sad thing. They were excellent shots, and all provided with pistols, which would have been very serviceable to us now, but which would be absolutely lost in the mission. We had left them, as well as the eight men in the mission, more from the presentiment that they could be useful to us there than from any military foresight and judgment.

But what were twelve, however excellent marksmen, against two hundred and fifty dragoons and two companies? We then regretted having thus staked those good shots, who could just now have rendered us such important service, for what was more important than all, our ammunition now began to fail; very few had brought more than sixteen charges of powder and ball with them, and these were now shot, except six rounds, which, I assure you, did not give very pleasant music to our war dance.

But faint heart never won fair lady. For a minute we considered, and in the next we decided. Letting the deed follow quickly upon the decision, I undertook, with twenty men, to press into the gap which the scattered companies had made in the enemy's line, to seize the enemy in the flank—at last, to take the cannon, while Fanning and Wharton attacked them in front.

This cannon was now manned by only one officer, who alone ventured to stand by it and to load it. He also fell just as I was turning to my men in order to select the twenty to follow me.

But in the same moment something reels at my side; I turn round—the wild, ghostly man, whom, in the critical moments before mentioned, I had happily forgotten, fell with a yelling scream against me like an ox struck on the head with an ax, his discharged rifle convulsively seized by both hands, and his distorted eyes rolling wildly

in their sockets. In the frightful rolling of the eyes, and the horrid looks, I recognize him.

"Bob!" I shrieked.

"Bob!" rattled he, casting a horrified and horrifying look at me—"Bob!" and who are you?"

The dim eyes threw a wild glance at me, and then closed. But to me it seemed as though there really were a specter behind me. My head turned upon my shoulders; horrid visions danced about me. For the moment, I really did not know whether I was upon or under the earth.

But the field of battle, with thirteen hundred enemies for companions, is a very useful place to have one's head set right, and to illuminate the chaos of thought; at least it was the case with me. Some of my men had sprung upon the cannon, had affixed the ammunition wagon to it, the first being loaded, and had drawn them both forward, while the others surrounded them right and left as a guard. They were still engaged with the artillery, when an astonished—"See! just look!" made me look up.

The enemy seemed to be in a situation similar to ours. They also staggered, the whole line, columns and squadrons, as though they saw a ghost. My men had not yet fired a shot, though Fanning and Wharton had certainly fired about twenty shots, when the nearest columns, as well as the furthest, got into this singular movement.

It was a singular tremor that came over them, as though they were moved by an earthquake, an internal shock, a commotion which throws everything into confusion.

We kept our rifles in reserve for protecting the cannon, and the last double loaded. I had just supplied it with priming powder when the wavering of the enemy became so violent, that I commanded the guards to file themselves on each side of the cannon.

The columns of the infantry appeared exactly like monstrous masses of rock, and, in their brown uniforms, resembled such masses, when, torn from their beds, they stagger for an instant, uncertain on which side to fall. I had hastily lighted the match, fired, and discharged case shot. But the enemy had not waited for this. Like the masses of rock above mentioned, the whole line, suddenly tearing away, had burst from each other, but the columns opposite to us were not the first; the outer left wing commenced the movement; the central followed, and the wings standing before us to the left had followed last; but one had drawn the other.

It was the most irregular flight I had ever seen—infantry, cavalry, each chased the other. I cannot better represent it to you than as masses torn from the top of a rock, which also carry everything away with them.

We stood, we looked, we stared, for a long time; we could not understand the enemy and his singular flight.

At last both became clear to us. The infantry, that is, the left wing, leading toward the Salado, had pushed the right wing out into the prairie toward the Musqueet islands, in order to join themselves to the dragoons *vis-a-vis* of us, and there united to press against us; a maneuver which, as I have said, was to divide our vigilance and strength, and so bring us into confusion.

The plan was not a bad one; already had the infantry, as well as cavalry, advanced toward the island, without the slightest suspicion that this would be occupied by us. In fact, nothing looked very suspicious there.

Our twelve excellent riflemen, hidden behind the trees, let the squadrons and companies advance to within twenty steps of the island; but when they had got so far, they suddenly showed fire, considerably using first their pistols and then their rifles.

A surprise of about thirty shots suddenly coming from an ambuscade might well have disconcerted the best troops; how much more then our worthy Mexican *doms*, who, hardly recovered from their first shock imagined themselves surrounded, on all sides,

by the incarnate *diablos*, as they called us.

In order to escape from them as quickly as possible, they broke away on every side, carrying the infantry, column after column, unresistingly with them, until, at last, the whole line broke into an endless swarm of fugitives. Thus came the victory; but we ourselves knew not how. Fanning and Wharton's men had fired twice, mine only once, when the enemy at once broke out like a herd of wild mustangs followed by hunters, and rushed into the prairie.

CHAPTER XXV.

LOOKING FOR BOB.

OUR American spirit sometimes shows itself queerly, almost distortedly; but yet, you always find at last that it has struck the nail right; that the eye of the people sees justly, even more justly than that of its rulers, or rather servants.

Afterward, I had frequent opportunity of perceiving this, and each time when I submitted to this spirit, I went happily through with my undertakings; while on the other hand the not attending to the people's voice, by my never-to-be-forgotten friend, not only drew down his ruin, but almost that of our new-born State. The best thing, however, is, that brother Jonathan, spite of the queer notions which sometimes cross his brain, never loses sight of the great end, his own advantage, as here also was the case.

It is true our men refused to shoot, but not to advance toward the opposite bank in order to keep the enemy and the direction they took in view.

We therefore ordered the old bear-hunter and twenty men across, and then took up our old position again.

I however hurried to mind with a haste which might well have excited the surprise of my men, for already during the last events my demeanor had been singular enough! I had turned about like a drunkard—as though I saw ghosts.

In fact I did see them! Like a real specter, the vision of Bob had, during the attack, the flight of the enemy, swept before me the whole time; a confused spirit took possession of me, which drove and impelled me to his body. It seemed, too, as if my peace depended upon my seeing it—a fixed idea which so firmly seized me that I ran frantically to the place, and, arrived there, ran with eager eyes to look around for him.

My behavior must have been strange, for my men were alarmed, and hastened to me to see what there could be between the wild prairie man and myself.

But nowhere could we find any trace of him. Seeking all about the place where he had fallen, I then went upward along the edge of the bank, by the vines, then again downward, and looked at each infantry, artillery and cavalry man, but could not find him.

A feeling of desperation came over me which was quite unbearable.

I felt as though the destroying angel was let loose and was flying about, stretching out his claws toward me.

Wharton spoke to me, and asked if I was seeking the wild prairie man.

I sprang toward him and challenged him to tell me where he was.

He shook his head; he did not know what had become of him, nor where he was gone. Only so much he could assure me, that no one would easily put him so out of composure.

The men who had surrounded Wharton gave the same assurance. They had been staying in the vine grove, about fifty steps behind Fanning's men; when, just as the infantry were about to advance from the fort to the prairie, a man from the north had come trotting on a mustang, had stopped about two hundred paces above the prairie, dismounted, bound his mustang to a vine stock, and then, with his rifle on his arm, had advanced quickly along the prairie edge toward the enemy.

Having arrived at Wharton's division, the latter had commanded him to halt and to say who he was, where he came from, and whither he was going?

The man's reply was, that who he was did not concern the questioner, nor where he came from; and as to where he was going, he would see he was going against the enemy. "Then you must join yourself to us," cried Wharton to him. This proposal the man impatiently refused; he wished to fight for himself, and on his own account. "You dare not," cried Wharton again. He would see who would prevent him; and with these words he went away.

A minute afterward, and he had already shot the first artillery man down. Of course he was now allowed to fight on his own account. What had happened further, or what had become of him after his fall, no one could say. At last one of them had seen the old bear-hunter by him. To the bear-hunter I hurried at once. The explanation I got from him was as follows: Calculating (to use his own words) that the rifle of the wild prairie man was certainly as capital a rifle as had ever killed a bear, and that it might easily fall into improper hands, he had considered it a duty to prevent such danger, and to take the rifle into his own keeping, on which account he had gone to the dead prairie man, although his frontispiece was anything but inviting, with the intention of removing the rifle from his hands, but for his trouble he had received a blow which had very nearly stretched him alongside of the dead man, at which he had looked rather perplexed; and as he thus looked, he saw that the wild man was feeling about his buckskin waistcoat, and that he undid it and showed a wound on his breast.

The wound had not been either deep or dangerous; and although the ball had knocked the man down and stunned him, it had not penetrated his breast, but had bounded against the breastbone, so that he himself had drawn it out. Upon which the prairie man had seized his rifle, and without saying either "thank you" or "d—n you," had taken the road to the vine grove; had drawn his mustang up the prairie bank, had mounted it, and then rode slowly away in a northerly direction. That was all that he knew of the man, and he did not wish to know or see more of him, for what he had seen was not calculated to fill him with any desire to renew the acquaintance.

That was a countenance which really did not give one church-going thoughts; a real fratricide's face; it did not look human, and it seemed to him as though the man to whom it belonged had fallen from the gallows at least a dozen times.

While the man was thus speaking an indescribable unpleasant sensation, a real horror, had seized me. In my childhood, I had heard from my Catholic nurse, a legend of a twelve-fold murderer, who had been twelve times hanged and quartered in the different provinces of Ireland, but always after the execution the mangled parts of the body were put together at midnight and reanimated by a wicked sorcerer in the form of a black cat.

At last, for the thirteenth time, he was beheaded with a sword dedicated to St. Patrick, over which the wicked sorcerer had no power, so that he could only put together those limbs which had not been touched by the sword, which, however, was done at midnight, in a certain part of Ireland.

Will you believe it? The image of this twelve-fold murderer now stood before me; not only in all its own horrible figure, but also, absurd as it may appear to you, it assumed exactly the features of Bob.

CHAPTER XXVI.

EFFECTS OF THE VICTORY.

MAN is a real riddle; and to this day what I then felt is still inconceivable to me.

I felt just as I did after the scenes in the prairie at Jacinto; the workings of these fantasies on my body were so violent that the perspiration pressed out of all my pores, my consciousness died away, and I fell in a feverish swoon at the edge of the prairie.

Fanning, who had hurried to my assistance in alarm, succeeded at last, but not without difficulty, in restoring me to my recollection. With him came a man whom the sergeant (whom we had left with a little picket in the Mission Esporedo) had sent to get information as to the state of things, and at the same time to inform us that General Austin was advancing with our little army.

He also had seen the wild prairie man for the first time when, posted on the church tower, he had observed the movements of the enemy. From thence he had seen a man coming from Conception, who had passed about two hundred steps before the mission, had urged his mustang frantically with both hands and feet; had fought with rifle and bowie-knife; and had behaved like a madman. He rode straight to the upper fort; about an hour after, he had seen him a second time slowly riding away in a northerly direction, and scarcely able to keep on his saddle.

Judging from his mustang, he must have come from the Mission Conception and have returned there. Without hesitation I made them bring me one of the horses taken from the dragoons, mounted it and rode off to the Mission. From the old Mexicans there, I heard the strange story that the *Herege Inglesey Americano*, who for years had been hunter to the Mission, had never spoken a word with a creature, not even with the pious Padres who had often come over from the chief town in order to bring him back into the bosom of the alone saving faith; that this Herege, after an illness of several weeks, had got up suddenly about three hours ago, saddled his mustang, thrown his rifle on his shoulder, and rode away in the direction we had taken, but was not returned.

According to their description, there was now not the slightest doubt but that Bob and the Herege Americano were one and the same person. But how did he come here? How was he saved; for at least twelve or fifteen minutes must have elapsed before the Alcalde could have cut him down from the lasso?

However, he had saved him; perhaps sent him to the Mission. But the same Alcalde had, chiefly on that account, had Johnny executed because he fled to Padre Jose. And Bob, was he become Catholic? If so, how came it that he fought against his companions in faith? If not, how was it they allowed him to stay so long in the Mission? It was all an enigma, which so perplexed me that my head turned like a top, and I began to fear I should lose my senses. I returned to my men in indescribable perplexity.

Not till I found myself at Fanning's side did these fantasies die away. When I told him what I had heard, he considered for an instant, and then a light seemed to burst upon him.

It is true I shook my head, but he showed me in many ways the probability of his supposition; which, although it did not appear so clear to me, had still this good effect, that it offered a point to which my thoughts could in some measure turn, and so turn back again to a reasonable channel. What this supposition was I must not now say; but it proved correct.

The most singular thing is, and remains the fact, that with the finger mark which my friend gave me, all the fantasies and horrid images disappeared at once, and Bob appeared again like any one else. The chaos in my mind passed away. The light began to break. The disposition in which I found my men completed my recovery.

A victory always works a peculiar effect upon the victorious. The revolution of feeling is so powerful that I can now well un-

derstand how the wounded, when already in the valley of death, come back once more to life in order to rejoice once more even amidst the death pangs.

It is in truth an intoxicating feeling, which works like a strong drink upon those unaccustomed to it. At least so it worked upon our men. I scarcely recognized them again.

A vast deal of self-confidence had taken possession of the greater part of them; they talked now in a high tone how one must manage with the Bustamentes, Santa Anna, and so on. Their manner, their tone, had become patronizing, bombastic, almost Spanish Grandezza, which contrasted drolly enough with their deer-skin waistcoats and twin jackets and coats.

They talked about Mexico as if they already stood with the keys before the gates of its capital, the Bustamentes and Santa Annas. Others, and just those who had fought with the most courage and ardor, presented quite a different spectacle. With them the reaction of feeling had taken quite a different direction. They were full of humility, philanthropy, yes, contrition; a sadness almost ridiculous had taken the place of bitterness, rage and bloodthirstiness, and showed itself in a not less striking manner.

Like poor sinners they looked at the fallen Mexicans with folded hands, and grieved thus to have destroyed the image of God. The same men who an hour before had sprung like tigers on their prey, stood now and looked at the fallen infantry men and dragoons with sorrowful and contrite looks! Could they at this instant have called the enemy back to life, I am persuaded they would have done it, and have greeted them as brothers.

These singular flights, as I may well call them, may appear very absurd to you, and quite unworthy of sedate, reasonable citizens, but they were quite natural after such a success as we had just achieved.

And you must also bear in mind that we were still novices in the art of war, and until now had not sustained a fight in open field; our expeditions as yet, with the exception of the fight of Nacogdoches, having been mere incursions.

To-day was the first time we had measured ourselves with the enemy face to face, and unimportant as the victory may appear to you, to us it was important in the highest degree. In this rencontre we had overcome the line troops of the Mexican government; had, in fact, almost destroyed the most celebrated battalion, that of Morales—luck which was certainly calculated to turn the heads of our steady farmers, who, until now, had only fought with bears, wolves, and jaguars, especially since, be the powder ever so good, there is some difference between knocking down a few bears and a few Mexican battalions.

Another circumstance also contributed to raise the self-satisfaction of our men. Our loss consisted of only one man, and he perished through his own fault. He had madly thrown himself in amongst the enemy when they had already broken away, and so received a ball in his stomach, from the effects of which he died in about half an hour afterward.

We had just rendered our daily account to the commanding officer, when a Mexican Prior came, with several vehicles and a white flag, to beseech the delivery of the dead. It was granted without opposition. But what we got out of the sly Padre determined us to advance before the capital that very evening.

There seemed to be some hopes of getting it in our power while under the influence of the first panic. It is true this was not the case, we found the gates barred, and the enemy on the look-out; but, nevertheless, our success had so shaken them, that they let us take up a strong position without the least opposition. We did this at the so-called Mill, about a cannon-shot from the enemy's great redoubt, from whence we

also occupied all the other approaches to the town. Before midnight we had surrounded it on all sides.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SIEGE OF SAN ANTONIO.

THE following day our sanguine hopes again subsided.

San Antonio de Bexar lies in a fertile watered valley, which descends westerly from Salado. In the middle of the town rises the Alamo, constructed according to the rules of war. It had forty eight cannons of light and heavy caliber, and, with the town, a garrison of nearly three thousand men.

Before we could get to the Alamo we must of course take the town, which was also strongly fortified.

Our whole artillery consisted of two batteries—four six- and five eight-pounders—our besieging army consisted of eleven hundred men, with whom we had not only to make head against town and fortress, but also against the enemy which menaced us from Cohahuila, and indeed from all sides. A rather difficult task you must allow.

The siege might last long, for the besieged men were richly provided with everything for a year, and behind their walls were quite secure from us. Months might pass before we succeeded, with our nine cannons, in effecting anything like a gap.

Nor was that all; considerations of another kind pressed unpleasantly upon us! Would our people be willing to endure the difficulties and hardships of a tedious siege. It is true they had quickly and joyfully followed the summons, and in the different *coups de main* which we had struck against the enemy had shown courage and endurance; but to carry through a *coup de main* and a tedious siege were very different things.

A siege requires not only courage and patience, but also in our case, a really slavish service, and above all the strictest military discipline. Would our men submit to the exhausting day and night watches: the necessary labor to open the trenches; and, above all, to the necessary military discipline? A very doubtful question. The majority of them were hot-blooded Southrons—brave, daring, impetuous, but also impudent fellows, whose chief virtues were certainly not patience and subjection.

The farmers from the Middle States, of whom we had then a considerable number, were, it is true, more considerate and cool, and perfectly convinced of the importance of the undertaking; but we did them no injustice in thinking that they would rather be with their wives and children, fields and cattle, than before the walls of Bexar.

The rest were mechanics from the Northern States: builders, bakers, carpenters, who had exchanged the trowel, the kneading-trough, and the plane for the musket. We had also no lack of adventurers of a better or worse kind, who came to enjoy some merry, dissolute days; and there were even criminals, also, who had fled from the fear of the laws.

You know that in such cases one cannot be very particular in one's selection; with such limited resources we did not dare be so. But such a comprehensiveness has also its evils; particularly when, as here, just the thing which is necessary to tame the bad element, and keep it within bounds, namely, the power to reward or to punish, was so precarious; when the jurisdiction was new and consequently wavering; when the cement which bound the newly erected fabric had not hardened; when the importance, the energy, which only long-established authority gives, was wanting. The worst subjects we must connive at the most, and must wink at things which, at the very first, would have brought well-regulated soldiers to desperation. We younger staff-officers (Fanning and I had

been appointed colonels on the field of battle) felt this the most, and shook our heads the most apprehensively, in the council of war. We showed open doubts as to whether it would be possible to bring the siege to a successful termination with such a heterogeneous assembly. At any rate, it appeared clear to us that it would at the same time decide the fate of Texas, and be the turning point of the war. Were we in a position to bring our men into something like discipline? If so, there was hope; but if not, we might as well quit the field and Texas. As respects Fanning, Wharton and myself, the interlude with the bear-hunter still ran very unpleasantly in our heads. But the older ones, and with them General Austin, reasoned quite differently. They knew the spirit of the men, which we as yet did not.

But our people's spirit is a quite peculiar spirit. Our proverb says—"If it is cold with us, it freezes; if it is hot, it melts; if it rains, it pours;" and in this it illustrates our national character as well as our climate.

Our people do not like halves. If they desire anything, they desire it wholly. Difficulties and dangers do not terrify them, but only serve the more to spur them on. Half of them might sink in this struggle, the others would be sure to push through it.

No people on earth, the ancient Romans perhaps excepted, have had this intense energy, this enduring and almost terrible strength of will.

This was shown before Bexar. The order of the day, which was read aloud after the council of war, was listened to by the soldiers so earnestly and seriously, that we began to feel dismayed; but in the next moment all uneasy thoughts vanished.

The whole of them, eleven hundred as they were, stepped forward, and coolly and calmly gave first the General and then us their hand and word to make Texas free, even if their lives must be the sacrifice.

No hurrahs, no enthusiasm, but the oaths of serious men. And they kept their oaths like men, in a manner which those only can appreciate who know from experience what it is to besiege a strong city, and at the same time to oppose an enemy who has the resources of a comparatively powerful republic to fall back upon.

I do not say too much when I assert, that our eleven hundred men performed deeds from which five thousand of the most injured of Napoleon's Imperial Guards would have shrunk back. In the first week, not a day passed without an attack or skirmish. General Cos stood on the boundary of Texas and Cohahuila with five thousand men, and his dragoons, real Parthians, who came like locusts, surrounded us in every direction.

But it was exactly against these that our mercurial adventurers were of the most service. They had noses like bloodhounds. They smelt the enemy at twenty miles' distance, and troops of riders and detachments were so easily raised and brought home, that often we could scarcely trust our own eyes. They were on the lookout day and night.

The Mexicans that ventured to put their heads over the wall for ten seconds, were certain to be shot down.

I cannot say that our military discipline was perfectly according to rule; but in its place there was a spirit, a working together, a fixed end in view, which increased tenfold the strength of our eleven hundred men.

Our respectable farmers and planters were at first the most lazy, but they soon felt themselves carried on, and forgot wives and children, land and cattle. Our hot-blooded Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia men worked like niggers in the trenches.

It is true that the general and we staff-officers gave them a good example in this respect. There was in all the same heart and mind; all kept one and the same idea in view—the taking of the town, the independence and deliverance of Texas.

I saw on this occasion how much a great idea can accomplish. Moreover, a Mexican, like a Spaniard, is a very different opponent behind the walls and ramparts from what

he is in the open field; but even here the bad powder helped us. The balls of the besieged never reached us, although we stood near enough to the ramparts; they fell so harmlessly before us, that every week we collected some thousands of them, and were able to send them back effectively with our double Dupont-powder.

Then we did not want for interesting interludes. Fanning captured a pretty strong convoy of provisions, with 20,000 silver dollars; Travers got a second of four hundred horses. I obtained a similar prize.

The siege became a real school for us, in which we were first of all really prepared to become soldiers. At the end of eight weeks we had made breaches; the town surrendered; and four weeks later, the fort did the same.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAPTURE OF GOLIAD.

IN the possession of an important artillery park, we now advanced before Goliad, the most important fortress in Texas. It capitulated after a few weeks.

We were then masters of the whole country; the war appeared ended.

But that it was not really so, was only too evident to every clear-sighted person. The Mexicans are not the people to allow themselves to be thus easily dispossessed of one of their most beautiful countries.

The Mexican character is as tough as the Spanish, which it has had sufficient opportunity of testing during the three hundred years of its government in Mexico.

If they had forced the Spaniards, whom they still considered as the bravest nation in the world, out of the land, why not us, a handful of adventurers, who had dared, not only to oppose themselves to the decrees of the great republic, but even to take away her towns and fortresses? This insult must be revenged in the severest manner; the honor of the republic, compromised in the eyes of the world, must, as quickly as possible, be vindicated.

The President and commander-in-chief of their armies exerted themselves to take the command of the avenging army—to make a fearful example for all time. The rebels were to be destroyed from off the earth—to be rooted out, with their wives and children. That was the strain of their speeches in Congress, in the state assemblies, in their sermons, and in their leading articles.

The States offered their State treasures; the archbishops and bishops their episcopal treasures; the towns and cloisters offered their respective treasures. Ten thousand men of the best troops were immediately ordered to the border; ten thousand more followed. The President, Santa Anna, himself, joined these with his numberless staff.

Thundering proclamations went before him. The Cabinet of Washington, which not only secretly, but even openly countenanced the rebels by occupation of Nacogdoches; the Southern States, which had dared to assist us with money and volunteers; the whole Union was to be most severely chastised.

Texas was first of all to be freed from the rebels, and then they were to press into the Union; everything was to be destroyed by fire and sword, and Washington itself to be turned into a heap of stones.

These threats sounded rather fierce in our ears, although I cannot exactly say that they made any particular impression upon us. On the contrary, we thought too little about it, and did not duly prepare ourselves to receive the enemy with the force which the country, spite of its limited resources, was still able to produce.

To confess the truth, our people were blinded by the success they had hitherto had, and did not think it possible that the Mexicans would venture again to attack us.

They forgot that the troops against which they had as yet fought were, with the ex-

ception of a few battalions, for the most part mere rubbish; that several of the Mexican States were provided with excellent soldiers, especially cavalry, and also that this time they would be sure to take care to bring better powder with them.

Several men capable of bearing arms did not at first respond to the earnest appeal of Burnet, the then President of Texas, but preferred to manage their cotton and corn fields.

Against the twenty thousand men who marched toward us we collected little more than two thousand, and nearly two-thirds of these we were obliged to leave in charge of the fortresses of Goliad and Alamo.

In the first of these we left eight hundred and sixty men under the command of the never-to-be-forgotten Fanning; in the last we left five hundred, so that not many more than seven hundred remained to us.

The enemy came on more decisively than we had expected; indeed they came on so rapidly, that before we were aware of it we were driven back from Goliad, and obliged to leave this as well as Bexar to its fate.

A melancholy fate! We had already made a sad mistake in diminishing our small power by the garrisoning of two fortresses, and leaving our very best men to be immured in them.

An American is not of much use in a fortress. Even the close air does not suit him, and the restraint deadens his body and mind. He is no longer his former self, his activity, freshness, and courage forsake him; he becomes dull and stupid.

In free air the American, though ten times beaten, remains invincible, for before they expect it, he gives his opponent the eleventh time a blow which balances the ten disasters, and leaves him conqueror at last. Our war history offers dozens of instances in which our men, already surrounded and hedged in on all sides, have still been able to hew out a passage, and take from the enemy the advantage they had gained.

Fanning heard in Goliad that a handful of expelled country people, women, girls, and children, followed by the enemy, were fleeing to the fortress. Tender-hearted as he was, he allowed himself to be carried away by his sympathy, and determined to send succor to the helpless ones.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FATE OF FANNING.

HE ordered Major Ward to march out with the Georgia battalions, to take up the fugitives and conduct them to the fortress. The major, the officers, represented, entreated, beseeched; Fanning saw only his helpless countrywomen, and remained firm to his order. The major marched out with his battalion of 500 men toward the fugitives.

When he came near to them he found, instead of countrywomen, Mexican dragoons, who sprang upon their horses concealed in the next island, and immediately began the conflict. More and more enemies came on all sides; there were horsemen from Louis Potosi and Santa Fe, perhaps the best cavalry men in the world; for the people there may almost be said to be born on horseback. The combat lasted two days. The 500 men fell except two.

We, at headquarters, not dreaming of this fearful blow, sent orders to Fanning to quit the fort and join us with six pieces of cannon. Fanning received the command and hastened to obey it. But to push a way through an immense army, which might have been quite possible with 860 men and six pieces, was no longer possible with only 360 men.

Nevertheless, he undertook the march through the prairie; was attacked by the enemy who were everywhere lying in ambush; was encircled by them, and defended himself thus encircled for twelve hours, and always pressing onward, at length gained an island; but scarcely had he done so than

it appeared that all his ammunition was used.

He then accepted from the enemy the proffered capitulation, by which he was allowed to return with his men after they had delivered up their arms. Scarcely, however, had they delivered up their rifles than the enraged enemy fell upon the defenseless ones, and all were slaughtered, only three men and an out-guard succeeding in reaching us.

The 500 that we had left in Bexar and the Alamo met with no better fate.

Too weak to occupy properly a town of from four to six thousand inhabitants and garrison the fort, the enemy soon pressed into the first and our people retired into the latter.

With an immense artillery the enemy succeeded in shivering to pieces a portion of the fort. A frightful struggle took place on this—it lasted eight days. Thousands of Mexicans fell; of our 500 countrymen not one remained.

Those were indeed hard trials; two-thirds of our best men fallen, the fortresses in the power of the enemy, our whole array scarcely more than 700 men against a vast victorious army which still continued to receive fresh reinforcements.

Truly a moment to try the strongest soul!

Everywhere thousands of fugitives; they came in droves; death-tired women, helpless mothers with sucking infants, troops of girls and boys packed on mustangs and wagons, and behind them the Mexican dragoons sweeping through the prairie and destroying everything with fire and sword.

CHAPTER XXX.

BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO.

THE commander-in-chief, the President of Mexico, Santa Anna, pressed on with his army in two divisions, the one along the coast toward Velasco, the other against San Felipe de Austin; he himself led the center. At Fort Bend, twenty miles below San Felipe, he crossed the Brazos, advanced before Louisbourg, gained 600 additional men to himself, and intrenched himself in this position, his strength consisting of about 1,500 men.

Our headquarters, under the command of General Houston, were before Harrisburgh, to which the congress retired. It was in the night of the 20th of April. We encamped about 600 men, the whole disposable power we still possessed, before an island of sycamores.

Dark and stormy hung the clouds over the tops of the trees, whose whistling and rushing harmonized only too well with our wild thoughts. We sat around the general and the Alcalde—both very exhausted and very sad. They often stood up, went into the island, and returned again. They appeared to await something with the greatest impatience.

Suddenly there sounded a loud "Who's there?"

An aid-de-camp came hastily and whispered something in the Alcalde's ear. He sprang up, rushed into the island, came back in a few minutes, whispered a few words in the general's ear, he in ours, in the next moment we were on our legs.

All our men were admirably mounted and well armed with rifles, double pistols and bowie-knives; before ten minutes had elapsed we were on the march.

Of the six cannons we had with us we took only four, but those doubly horsed.

The whole night we marched at a fast trot, a tall haggard man went before us as conductor. Many times I asked the Alcalde who he was.

"You will find out who he is," was his answer.

Before the morning broke we had left five-and-twenty miles behind us, but we were also obliged to leave behind us two of the cannons. Still we did not know our desti-

nation. The general commanded the men to refresh themselves with food and drink, whilst we assembled around him in a council of war. Now we learned the reason of our night march.

The President and general-in-chief of the Mexicans stood, not a mile from us, in a fortified position; twenty miles behind us was General Parza with 2,000 men; eighteen miles below the Brazo was General Filasola with 1,000; five-and-twenty miles above, Visca with 1,500. Only a speedy decisive attack could save Texas. There was not a moment to lose, not one was lost. The general, stepping in amongst the eating and drinking men, said:

"Brothers, friends, citizens! General Santa Anna stands in an intrenched encampment with 1,500 men. The moment for deciding the independence of Texas is come. Is the enemy ours?"

"It is ours," cried the men joyfully, and with the cry they advanced.

Arrived within two hundred steps of the Mexican encampment we opened the fire with our two cannons, but kept back our rifles until we had got within five-and-twenty steps of them; we then gave the enemy a salute, after which we threw away our rifles, and with the pistols in our right and left hands, and bowie-knives between our teeth we sprang upon the breastwork, fired at the stupefied and staring Mexicans with one pistol, then grasped the bowie-knives, and with a hurrah, the horribly wild sound of which rings still in my ears and nerves, we broke into the camp.

Just as in boarding an enemy's ship, with the knife in the right hand, the pistol in the left, our men pressed on.

What was not struck down was shot down, with a wild mirth, a demoniacal laugh exactly like the desperate vehemence of fool-hardy seamen who already regard the enemy's ship as their own.

I commanded the right wing, where the breastwork, ending in a redoubt, ran up steeper. Springing up, I fell down; a second attempt was no more successful. With the help of one of my men behind me I had clambered up for the third time, but, drawn back by my own weight, I was on the point of falling into the trench when a hand from above seized me by the collar and drew me up the parapet. In the excitement and tumult I did not see the man, but I did see the bayonet which, at the moment that he helped me, penetrated his shoulder. He did not shrink, did not let go until I was up, then only he turned aside with a painful shrug and slowly raised his pistol against the Mexican. When the latter was shot down the Alcalde had sprung up. He then screeched a "No thanks, squire!" which even in this dreadful scene filled me with horror.

I looked round, but he was already at the side of the Alcalde, engaged in combat with a troop of Mexicans, who were defending themselves desperately. He fought not like a man who wishes to kill, but like one who himself wishes to be slain.

Like a wild boar, blind and wounded, he rushed into the midst of the enemy, thrust right and left; the Alcalde at his side defending him from blows and thrusts.

A hundred of my men had by this time assembled around me; for an instant I looked over the field of battle to see where my help might be most needed, and then turned round to press forward. In this moment the voice of the Alcalde caught my ear.

"Dear Bob! Are you severely wounded?"

The "dear Bob," the screaming, anxious, almost desperate tone of the Alcalde, went through me and kept me back.

I looked round. Bob, it was his very self, lay bloody and senseless in the arms of the Alcalde.

I gave one more look at him, and then with my men tore onward into the middle of the tumult, toward the center of the encampment, where the fight was the hottest. About 500 men, the flower of the oppos-

ing army, had assembled like a bulwark around their general and his staff. A frightful group, who defended themselves desperately! General Houston had attacked them with 300 men, but was not able to break through their ranks. What had not succeeded at the first attack did so at the second. My men gave a wild hurrah, each fired off a pistol, and then sprang over the bodies of the fallen and falling into the broken ranks.

A horrible massacre followed.

These formerly peaceful and quiet citizens were no longer men, but incarnate devils! Whole ranks of enemies fell beneath their knives.

You may form an idea of the horror of this butchery, when I tell you that the whole fight, from the commencement of the attack up to the capture of the congregated Mexicans, was decided in less than ten minutes, and that within these less than ten minutes nearly eight hundred of the enemy were shot, struck, and knocked down.

All, without exception, would have been slaughtered, the cry of vengeance, "No quarter, think of Alamo, of Goliad, of the brave Fanning, of Ward!" resounded on all sides; but the general and we staff-officers threw ourselves before the kneeling Mexicans, who were howling, "*Misericordia! quartel por el amor de Dios!*" and threatened our men, that we would strike them down if they did not put an end to the slaughter.

This had the desired effect. It succeeded in putting a stop to their rage, and in preserving a victory, which, in the history of Texas, will certainly shine as one of the most glorious, free from the stain of unmanly cruelty.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DEATH OF BOB.—CAPTURE OF SANTA ANNA.

EXHAUSTED, I had tottered away from the place of slaughter to the point where I had left the Alcalde and Bob. This latter lay bleeding from at least six wounds, only a few paces from the place where he had drawn me up. Two bodies, thrown one over the other, served him for a pillow.

The Alcalde, kneeling by his side, was supporting his head, with a look full of sorrow and pity turned upon the dim eyes and fixing features of the dying man.

The scene affected me wonderfully.

I approached with something like a pious shudder.

Bob was at the point of death. But it was not the death of a murderer; no longer the ghastly, wild features, the fixed desperate look of a murderer—a calm peace, a pious confidence illuminated the countenance, and the eyes were turned hopefully, beseechingly to Heaven.

As I bent over him, and asked him, with a moved voice, how he felt, he appeared to wish to collect his powers once more. But he no longer recognized me.

After a time he groaned, "How stands the fight?"

"We have won, Bob! The enemy is dead or taken; not one has escaped."

"Tell me," he rattled again, after a time, "have I done my duty? Dare I hope in God?"

With a trembling voice, the Alcalde rejoined: "The Son of God, who forgave the thief upon the cross, will also be merciful to you. His Holy Word says: 'The angels in heaven have more joy over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety-and-nine just men that need no repentance.' Hope, Bob! the All-merciful will be merciful to you."

"Thank you, Alcalde," murmured Bob. "You are a true friend, a friend until death—in death. Will you not pray for my poor soul? I feel it is going. It feels so well to me?"

The kneeling Alcalde prayed—"Our Father which art in heaven."

Involuntarily I knelt with him. At the first petition, the lips of the dying man moved; then they were convulsed in the agonies of death. At the closing words—"For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory," the eye was already dim, the life gone.

With looks full of anguish, the judge stared for a time at the corpse: he then rose, and said, in a low tone, "God above willeth not the death of a sinner, but that he live, and repent. So I thought as, this day four years, I cut him down from the branch of the patriarch."

"This day four years," said I, much moved—"and it was you then that cut him down, in order that he might repent? And did he repent? Was it he who yesterday brought us the news of the enemy to the encampment before Harrisburgh?"

"He has done more than that," rejoined the Alcalde, and one tear burst forth after another. "He has for the last four years, tired to death, and weary of existence, carried on a miserable, despised, and slighted existence. Four years has he served us; lived for us; fought for us; acted the spy, without hope, expectation, honor, comfort; without a single quiet hour, or one other wish than for death. The most exalted virtue, the highest patriotism, would turn back shudderingly from the sacrifice which this man opened for us, for Texas—and he was a sixfold murderer!"

"God will be merciful to his soul, will he not?" he asked again, softly.

"He will be," I rejoined, deeply affected.

Awhile he stood lost in deep thought, then he cried, suddenly—"He must be so, colonel! surely he must; for was there not in this Bob, until his last drawn breath, a powerful godly spark? did it not burn in him for his citizens' and neighbors' good? did he not live and suffer for his fellow-men? Ah! if you knew, colonel!"

He stopped short, like one who fears to say too much. I looked at him with astonishment. The man was all at once beside himself.

I perceived also, that here there was more than customary sympathy; that there was an important secret involved. The Alcalde was so beside himself, he who was usually so cool, so calm, who could be brought by nothing out of his apathy, now spoke and behaved like a maniac. I sought to draw him to the field of battle, upon which he again began to be very noisy. He pushed me almost rudely aside.

"Ah! if you knew this Bob!"

"What is it with this Bob, dear Alcalde?"

He looked at me with a reserved look, and murmured, "Go, go, leave me to my anguish!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

CAPTURE OF SANTA ANNA.

STILL I hesitated; but several of my men came running, and drew me forcibly to the field of battle.

There everything was in the greatest confusion. Santa Anna was not among the prisoners; he had escaped.

The discovery, but just made, had wrought their minds into the most dreadful ferment.

This was intelligible, for more depended upon him than upon the battle we had won—author of the invasion—all-powerful President of Mexico—commander-in-chief of the assembled armies, his capture must have decided the fate of the war.

The victory which we had so gloriously obtained was, to a certain extent, nothing without him; for just the certainty of getting him in our power, and thus, with one blow, putting an end to the war, had more than everything else spurred on our desperate valor. And now he had escaped! A very critical moment!

We had among our men a few dozen in-

credibly desperate fellows, with whom we were always obliged to deal with the pistol in one hand and the sword in the other. Drawn together in a knot, they stood shooting looks upon the prisoners, which left us no doubt what their thoughts were.

Not an instant was to be lost. At the head of our best proved men we pressed hastily forward, took the prisoners in the center, and, after having assured them of safety, began our examination. We learnt that Santa Anna was seen in his traveling carriage at the commencement of the fight, anxiously observing our attack.

He must, therefore, have fled while we were pressing into the encampment, and could not possibly be very far. We immediately made known this joyful intelligence by a bulletin, and then made some hasty arrangements for pursuing the fugitive.

A hundred of our people were sent with the prisoners to Harrisburgh; another hundred were sent after Santa Anna. The last task fell to our share.

There were there some excellent and well-rested horses. We mounted them, and set off in the prairie. A hot chase, as you may easily imagine, but then the fate of Texas hung upon its success!

Taking the greatest possible circuit, we pressed on the one side nearly into the neighborhood of Felasola's division, on the other into that of Parza, then we came nearer to each other, and again to our camp.

For a long time all our trouble was in vain—we had already been more than fourteen hours in the saddle, and had ridden more than a hundred miles, and yet no trace of the, to us, so precious game.

We had already got again within seven miles of the camp, when, at last, one of our most able sportsmen discovered slight traces

of a man's foot, which turned in the direction of a bog. We followed these traces, got into the marsh, and found sticking there a man, apparently about forty years old, up to his waist in mire, and quite unrecognizable from mire and mud.

We drew him out half dead, washed him, and recognized him by the mild, but malicious blue eyes, and high, narrow brow, the long, thin commencing but fleshy ending nose, the over-hanging upper lip, and the long chin.

From the description we had of him, it could be no other than the President Santa Anna.

It was he, in fact, although his incredible cowardice kept me for some time in doubt, for he threw himself before us on his knees, and besought us, for the love of God and all the saints, not to take his life.

No promises, no assurances, even my word of honor and oath, were not able to bring him to a sense of what was due to himself. I was very glad when we arrived with him at the camp.

Just as we rode in, Bob was being buried with military honors. All the officers were at the funeral procession. But that did not so much surprise me as that the Alcalde should appear as mourner. I asked about it, but he gave no answer. He never more said a word about Bob; and if I ever turned the conversation that way, his countenance always drew up in dark folds.

With Santa Anna's capture the war was, in fact, at an end. On the very same evening a truce was concluded between us and the commander-in-chief of Mexico. He himself sent the nearest commanding general, Filasola, an order to retire with his division, as well as General Parza, to Bexar.

General Viesea received instructions to set out for Guadalupe Vittoria.

Thus two-thirds of Texas were cleared, and a month later we were in possession of the whole land.

Meanwhile, the report of our victory had spread itself incredibly fast. On all sides came volunteers; in three weeks we had again an army of several thousand men, with which we maneuvered the enemy from one position to another.

It did not again come to a fight; they no longer stood the test—a hundred of our men were sufficient to chase thousands of the Mexicans.

Before Santa Anna was delivered up to the Central Government of Washington, Texas was quite free. He had, however, had much ill-treatment to endure—this Santa Anna; but it was his own fault, for, although there were rough people among our men, still no one would have lowered himself sufficiently to mortify a captured enemy.

Besides, it was not so much the unmanly cruelty with which he had raged against helpless women and children as his disgusting cowardice which incensed every one and drew upon him such ill-usage. It is true that this ceased afterward, when law and discipline again gained strength, and he was treated quite in accordance with his high rank.

But little remains to be told. Santa Anna as Dictator made a treaty acknowledging the independence of Texas.

Texas remained an independent republic until 1845, when it was annexed to the United States, and the lone star which graced its flag was added to the glorious constellation which glitters in the square field of the star-spangled banner.

[THE END.]

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